



EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

HIS LIFE, TEACHINGS  
AND INFLUENCE

GEORGE TROBRIDGE





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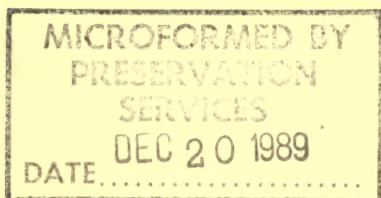
BY

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"Swedenborg, of all men in the recent ages, stands eminently for the translator of nature into thought."—EMERSON



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aspects, that a single volume can offer little more than an outline sketch of his career. The interested reader can fill in the outline himself from the great mass of material which is at his service. Only as he does so will he be able to form a just judgment of the man; for as Locke says: "He that judges without informing himself to the utmost that he is capable, cannot acquit himself of judging amiss." The majority of critics of Swedenborg do not trouble to thus inform themselves; hence the caricatures that are often presented as likenesses.

The present biography differs from former ones in that more particulars are given of Swedenborg's early life, his travels, personal characteristics, and political activities. The aim has been to present a portrait of the whole man, and not to dwell too exclusively on one aspect of his life's work. By most persons Swedenborg is regarded as a dreamy mystic, instead of the real, live, practical man that he actually was. This little sketch may help to remove that impression.

# EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

## CHAPTER I

### RELIGION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THERE are those who profess to believe in a gradual evolution of political, social, and religious life, which places each successive generation on a higher platform than its predecessors. The present inherits the accumulated wisdom of the past ; the living have the advantage of studying the faults and failures of their forefathers ; while knowledge is ever growing wider, and moral forces are visibly augmenting. So, at least, it seems in our time, and some are disposed to conclude that it always must have been so : but history does not support the conclusion. The eighteenth century was not morally superior to the seventeenth nor intellectually to the sixteenth ; the art and literature of the Romans were immeasurably inferior to those of the Greeks upon which they were founded ; and, in our own country, the later Gothic styles of architecture, notwithstanding the extraordinary skill and science they display, are marked by degradation and not improvement.

The progress of mankind, whether in art, literature, morals or religion, has always been like the ebb and flow of the tide. There are times when knowledge increases suddenly and enormously, and the march of civilisation advances like the inrush of a

strong spring tide ; wave after wave of some mighty impulse lifts humanity to unwonted heights of attainment : but the force is spent as rapidly as it arose, the tide falls back to its farthest limit, and the shores of life are seen dreary and desolate. Or the rising tide may be one of evil influences. At certain periods, waves of iniquity and unbelief sweep over society, mounting ever higher and higher until the solid ground of righteousness and judgment threatens to give way from under us : then the floods of wickedness are stayed by some new inspiration of humanity ; the arm of the Lord is stretched out, and the tide of evil is slowly but surely rolled back. Such is the course of human progress as revealed in history.

The rise and fall of religious systems is more remarkable, and less easily explained, than the fluctuations of civilisation. The arts will flourish under encouraging circumstances, and die out through the influence of political changes or religious ideas ; but religion will die out under what appear to be most favouring conditions, and will revive slowly and imperceptibly in spite of contempt and opposition. Great religious changes by no means conform to the law of steady and gradual evolution. Catastrophe marks the development of the religious life of the race, if it does not that of geological formations.

One of the great periods of spiritual



catastrophe was the time of the Incarnation. "Except that the Lord had shortened those days," we are told, "no flesh could have been saved."<sup>1</sup> The civilised world was immersed in heathenism or vain philosophy, with the exception of the Jewish nation, and their religion had become a lifeless ceremonialism. Righteousness seemed to have perished from the earth, and wickedness flaunted itself openly among high and low. Even the pious Pharisee, who thanked God that he was not as other men were, was declared by Him Who reads the hearts of men to be "a whited sepulchre, full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." The law which he professed to honour had been so overlaid with vain traditions as to hide the foundation of truth and righteousness upon which it rested. Living faith there was not, within the Jewish church or without it, except with a little remnant who looked for the coming Redeemer. The last times of the Jewish dispensation had come; its candlestick was removed out of its place, to make room for a more worthy vehicle of the Divine light.

The new lamp burned low for many generations, and few living in the first two centuries would have believed that before long its rays would reach to the farthest confines of the Roman Empire. But the little one in time became a thousand; the tiny seed developed into a great and spreading tree. By the despised Christian religion, though in a much corrupted and imperfect form, society was remodelled, new ideals were established, and the world was raised once more from its lost condition.

The centuries passed; Christianity became more and more corrupted and gradually lost its hold upon mankind, until in the eighteenth century religion in Europe had be-

come almost extinct. Another period of social and religious catastrophe had arrived. Christianity was still formally professed, but had ceased to be a controlling power in either national, social or individual life. International jealousies, and the personal ambition of rulers, provoked continual wars; politicians were corrupt and self-seeking; while unbelief and immorality were rife among all classes of society. England was not perhaps worse than other countries, but it is painful to read of the doings of our recent progenitors. There is no sadder chapter in Green's *Short History* than the opening chapter of "Modern England," which deals with this period. "Never," he says, "had religion seemed at a lower ebb. The progress of free inquiry, the aversion from theological strife which had been left by the Civil Wars, the new political and material channels opened to human energy, had produced a general indifference to all questions of religious speculation or religious life." "There was a revolt against religion and against churches in both the extremes of English society. In the higher circles of society 'everyone laughs,' said Montesquieu on his visit to England, 'if one talks of religion.'" And the revolt was not against religious teaching alone,—the cultured intellect refusing to accept any longer the irrational dogmas of theologians; but against the restraints of religion. Unbelief and immorality were united in an unholy bond: and the fruit of their union was an unblushing display of vice from the highest in the state to the lowest. "At the other end of the social scale lay the masses of the poor. They were ignorant and brutal to a degree which it is hard to conceive, for the increase of population which followed on the growth of towns and the development of commerce had been met by

<sup>1</sup> Mark. xiii. 20.

no effort for their religious or educational improvement. Not a new parish had been created. . . . The rural peasantry, who were fast being reduced to pauperism by the abuse of the poor laws, were left without much moral or religious training of any sort. . . . Within the towns things were worse. There was no effective police; and in the great outbreaks the mob of London or Birmingham burnt houses, flung open prisons, and sacked and pillaged at their will. The criminal classes gathered boldness and numbers in the face of ruthless laws which only testified to the terror of society, laws which made it a capital crime to cut down a cherry-tree, and which strung up twenty young thieves of a morning in front of Newgate; while the introduction of gin gave a new impetus to drunkenness."

Archbishop Secker, writing in 1738, thus sums up the case:

"An open and professed disregard of religion is become, through a variety of causes, the distinguishing character of the present age. Indeed, it hath already brought in such dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and such profligate intemperance and fearlessness of committing crimes in the lower, as must, if this mighty torrent of iniquity stops not, become absolutely fatal. And God knows, far from stopping, it receives, through the designs of some persons and the inconsiderateness of others, a continual increase."

What were the church and the government doing all the time? "In Walpole's day the English clergy were the idlest and most lifeless in the world." "The system of pluralities turned the wealthier and more learned of the priesthood into absentees, while the bulk of them were indolent, poor, and without social consideration. A shrewd,

if prejudiced, observer brands the English clergy of the day as the most lifeless in Europe, 'the most remiss of their labours in private, and the least severe in their lives.'" "A large number of prelates were mere Whig partisans with no higher aim than that of promotion. The levees of the ministers were crowded with lawn sleeves. A Welsh bishop avowed that he had seen his diocese but once, and habitually resided at the lakes of Westmoreland." Many of the clergy richly deserved the poet's satire:

"They hunt good livings and abhor good lives,"<sup>1</sup>

So much for the Church. It lived upon the people but not for the people; and the government was much the same. There was no proper representation of the people, nor were their interests considered in legislation, except in so far as the consideration of them might advance the position of some ambitious statesman. All were for place and power, and shameless bribery was the way to these. Corruption was "the great engine of politics." Every man had his price, and every constituency also. The House of Commons "ceased in any real or effective sense to be a representative body at all." "Great towns like Manchester

<sup>1</sup> Of the clergy in Swedenborg's own country, White writes:

"Few have any idea of the depth of stupor in which in those times the Swedish Church lay sunk. Its priesthood had become a mere corporation for reading so many prayers for so much money, and they had all the horror of worldliness and sloth at any pious activity. . . . As a consequence, theology, in any living sense, was uncultivated, and the laity were left in as profound ignorance of their Bibles as if they had been Papists. Gentlemen disdained the least taint of religion, and except on formal occasions, would have been ashamed to be caught church-going" (*Emanuel Swedenborg: His Life and Writings*, vol. i. p. 188).



or Birmingham remained without a member, while members still sat for boroughs, which, like Old Sarum, had actually vanished from the face of the earth. . . . Out of a population of eight millions, only a hundred and sixty thousand were electors at all. . . . Purchase was becoming more and more the means of entering Parliament. Seats were bought and sold in the open market at a price which rose to four thousand pounds, and we can hardly wonder that a reformer could allege without a chance of denial, 'This House is not a representative of the people of Great Britain. It is the representative of nominal boroughs, of ruined and exterminated towns, of noble families, of wealthy individuals, of foreign potentates.'"

So general was corruption and vice among politicians, that the absence of them in the conduct of a single individual made him conspicuous among his fellows. William Pitt is described as "the one statesman whose aims were unselfish, whose hands were clean, whose life was pure and full of tender affection for wife and child." "In the midst of a society critical, polite, indifferent, simple even to the affectation of simplicity, witty and amusing but absolutely prosaic, cool of heart and of head, sceptical of virtue and enthusiasm, sceptical above all of itself, Pitt stood absolutely alone."

It was not England only that had fallen to this deplorable condition. Matters in France were even worse, and were rapidly leading towards the Revolution; other countries also were in a state of disintegration, politically, morally and intellectually. Everywhere violence, immorality, insincerity and unbelief prevailed, with an almost total lack of zeal for righteousness. It was an age, as Carlyle says, of formulæ and simulacra; a century "spendthrift,

fraudulent bankrupt . . . utterly insolvent. . . . A century opulent in accumulated falsities,—sad opulence, descending on it by inheritance, always at compound interest, and always largely increased by fresh acquirement on such immensity of standing capital;—opulent in that bad way as never century before was! Which had no longer the consciousness of being false, so false had it grown; and was so steeped in falsity, and impregnated with it to the very bone, that—in fact the measure of the thing was full." <sup>1</sup> "There was need," he continues, "once more of a Divine Revelation to the torpid frivolous children of men, if they were not to sink altogether into the ape condition."

It was at this time, when the degradation was at its very lowest, that Swedenborg came with the announcement of such a new revelation. He proclaimed that the end of the first Christian dispensation had come, the Church having become thoroughly corrupt both in doctrine and in life, and that a renovation was about to take place. "There is not," he said, "a single genuine truth at this time remaining in the Church"; <sup>2</sup> "the light of truth derived from the Word is well-nigh extinguished"; <sup>3</sup> "so that at this day there is scarcely any faith, because there is not any charity. It is the consummation of the age." <sup>4</sup> Again he writes: "The church at this day is founded on opinion and not on conduct. He who believes otherwise than the church teaches, is cast out of its communion and his character defamed; but he who thieves (if he does not do so flagrantly), lies, betrays and commits

<sup>1</sup> *Frederick the Great*, Book I. chap. i. sec. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *True Christian Religion*, No. 758.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* No. 271.

<sup>4</sup> *Arcana Cœlestia*, No. 3398.



adultery, is yet called a Christian, if only he frequents a place of worship and talks piously." <sup>1</sup>

The darkest hour is before the dawn. While proclaiming the corruption of current Christianity, Swedenborg announced that the Lord "is also at this day accomplishing a redemption, by establishing a new heaven, and laying the foundation of a new church, with a view to make salvation possible to mankind." <sup>2</sup> The means of this great work were a general judgment in the World of Spirits, for the purpose of removing the evil influences that were pressing upon this world with ever-increasing intensity, and of making way for the influx of truth and righteousness; the opening of the interior sense of the Holy Scriptures, that true doctrine might be rationally discerned; and the revelation of the nature and character of life in heaven, hell, and the intermediate state. Swedenborg declared himself to be the Divinely chosen herald of a new dispensation, and that, as such, he was not only admitted to the society of angels and spirits, but directly instructed by the Lord in the doctrines of the New Church which was to rise out of the ashes of the fallen one.

This extraordinary claim is sufficient with many to mark the man as deluded, and to prevent them from examining his teachings. But such an attitude is foolish, unless we can be quite certain that no prophet of the Lord will ever again appear among men. If we refuse to listen to him, we can form no opinion, either good or bad, of his claims; if, however, we bring our reason and judgment to bear upon his life and writings, we shall surely be able to decide between the ravings or drivellings of insanity and the unfoldings of the Divine.

<sup>1</sup> *Arcana Cælestia*, No. 4689.

<sup>2</sup> *True Christian Religion*, No. 182.

## CHAPTER II

### SWEDENBORG'S ANCESTRY AND EARLY LIFE

WONDER has been expressed at Swedenborg's turning from natural science to theology in middle life; heredity might have had something to do with his interest in both subjects. His father was an eminent Lutheran bishop, and so he was reared in a theological atmosphere; while his grandfathers on both sides of the family were connected with the great mining industry of Sweden. Daniel Isaacsson, the father of Bishop Swedberg, was a member of a peasant family at Fahlun, and rose from comparative poverty to affluence by a successful mining venture. Albrecht Behm, Swedenborg's maternal grandfather, occupied a similar position at the Board of Mines to that which he himself held later.<sup>1</sup>

Jesper Swedberg was the second son of Daniel Isaacsson, and was born in 1653. His parents, who were pious people, devoted him to the Church, and he was ordained in 1682. He was appointed successively chaplain of the horse guards, Court chaplain in 1688, dean and pastor of Vingåker in 1690, professor in Upsala University in 1692, dean of Upsala, 1694, and Bishop of Skara in 1702, which last office he held for thirty-three years. He was a man of upright and pious life, an indefatigable worker and an enthusiastic reformer; one, in fact,

<sup>1</sup> The variety of names in the same family is explained by the custom of taking names from the family seat in place of the usual patronymic, and the change of title brought about by the ennoblement of the Swedberg family. The sons of Daniel Isaacsson called themselves Swedberg from the name of their homestead, "Sweden"; while Swedberg was again changed to Swedenborg when the bishop's family was ennobled by Queen Ulrica Eleonora in 1719.

whose exemplary conduct and untiring zeal made him conspicuous among his less earnest and more careless brethren. "If he had lived a few hundred years earlier," wrote one of his contemporaries, "he might have increased the number of Swedish saints . . . his learning, industry, exemplary life, good intentions, and zeal for God's glory deserve to be venerated even by a more enlightened century." He was active in the cause of education, whether as army chaplain, when he offered a premium to every soldier who learned to read, or later as professor of theology, and afterwards rector, in Upsala University. He endeavoured to reform the teaching in the public schools, composing and editing many text-books himself; and in every way exerted himself to promote the advancement of learning.

Although Sweden was a Protestant country the study of the Bible had fallen into desuetude in those lax times. Bibles, indeed, were somewhat expensive luxuries, a high price being charged for them by the privileged publishers. Swedberg set himself to remedy this, and to provide a cheap edition that all might possess; but, although he obtained the royal sanction, and expended a considerable sum of money himself in preparing such an edition, the power of vested interests was too strong, and the project fell through. His labours in connection with the revision of the Swedish translation of the Bible also came to naught; while his attempted improvement of the Swedish hymn and psalm book only brought upon him a charge of heresy and led to the suppression of the work. In every direction he seems to have been thwarted by the jealousy, apathy, and stolid conservatism of those who should have been his supporters and helpers in good works. Nevertheless, he per-

severed in his laudable efforts to the end of his long life.

Swedberg's religion was of an eminently practical character. In the Lutheran Church, as in other Protestant bodies, faith had been elevated to such pre-eminence that good works were disparaged, and morality suffered in consequence; Swedberg held that true faith could not be dissociated from a life of charity and active usefulness. He complained that "many contented themselves with the first and second paragraphs of the 'great faith' (*stor-tron*), but that they would have nothing to do with the third paragraph, with 'sanctification and a holy life.'" "'Faith of the head' (*hjärne tron*—i.e. brain faith) and 'devil's faith' with him were synonymous." He was a fearless preacher, denouncing the shortcomings of those in high places, as well as the peccadillos of humble sinners; being especially severe against the neglect of religious duties by the former, and the scandalous abuse of their rights of church patronage.

His catholicity was remarkable, considering the age in which he lived; he was willing to see what was good in all the Churches, and, during a visit to England, eagerly discussed the question of Christian unity with Bishop Fell of Oxford. In Roman Catholic countries he admired the care given to the poor and the devotion of high-born persons to the sick and destitute; in his own land he gave a word of approval to the earnestness of the Pietists, although he did not agree with all their tenets and practices. He is described by Counsellor Sandels as "a man full of zeal but without bigotry."

His personal tastes were simple and easily satisfied. He had a fair share of this world's goods, but died poor, as he had expended large

sums in printing and publishing, and other disinterested works, and besides had had severe losses by several fires.

His books for the most part were unsuccessful, and he complains that he has rooms full of unsold copies; remarking, with melancholy humour, that, after his death, they would probably be used by the women for their cakes.

It is not surprising that, to an earnest and devout man like Bishop Swedberg, the spiritual world should have seemed very real and near at hand. He had an assured faith in the presence of angels among men, and of the helpful offices they fulfil as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." He lived in the society of his "guardian angel," with whom, he declared, he was able to converse at times. He believed that he had other spiritual intimations on different occasions, and seems to have been possessed of powers of hypnotic healing. Not long after his ordination, he tells us that he heard mysterious voices singing in the church, which convinced him of the presence of angelic visitors, and caused him to feel more strongly than ever before the sacredness of the calling to which he had devoted himself. All these matters have a bearing on the still more extraordinary experiences of his son, Emanuel; the idea of the intimate relations that subsist between the physical and the spiritual worlds was no doubt familiar to the latter from his father's teaching.

Such was the father of the subject of our sketch. Of his mother we do not hear much; she was doubtless pretty fully occupied with household cares, having borne nine children during her twelve years of married life. She died at thirty years of age, when Emanuel was only eight.

Strangely little is known of Swedenborg's childhood. He was born at Stockholm on the 29th of January 1688, and was the second son, and third child of his parents. Beyond these meagre facts, all that we can learn of this period of his life is from a letter addressed by him in 1769 to his friend, Dr Beyer, Professor of Greek in Gothenburg University. In this he says: "From my fourth to my tenth year I was constantly engaged in thought upon God, salvation, and the spiritual experiences of men; and several times I revealed things at which my father and mother wondered; saying, that angels must be speaking through me. From my sixth to my twelfth year I used to delight in conversing with clergymen about faith, saying that the life of faith is love, and that the love which imparts life is love to the neighbour; also that God gives faith to everyone, but that those only receive it who practise that love. I knew of no other faith at that time, than that God is the Creator and Preserver of nature, that He imparts understanding and a good disposition to men, and several other things that follow thence. I knew nothing at that time of that learned faith which teaches that God the Father imputes the righteousness of His Son to whomsoever, and at such times, as He chooses, even to those who have not repented and have not reformed their lives. And had I heard of such a faith, it would have been then, as it is now, above my comprehension."<sup>1</sup>

If direct information is wanting as to the childhood of Swedenborg, we may fill up the blank to some extent from our imaginations, building upon a knowledge of the family circumstances at different periods. At the time of his birth, his father

<sup>1</sup> *Documents concerning Swedenborg*, vol. ii. p. 279.



was exercising the functions of Court chaplain at Stockholm. In the Swedish capital, then, the first three or four years of the child's life were spent, and he doubtless carried away impressions of the busy city, with its lofty buildings, its rushing flood of deep green waters coming down from Lake Malar, its shipping, its military displays, and the coming and going of royalty and nobility in their summer carriages or winter sleighs, to the quiet rural home of Vingåker, to which the family removed in 1692. Here, for a few brief months, he revelled, as all children do, in the flowery fields and delightful farmyards, and was petted by the good people of the parish, who were also overwhelmingly kind to his father.

The next ten years of his life were passed in Upsala, his parents residing in the cathedral square; and here his early education was received. His tutor was Johannes Morceus, afterwards Dr Morceus, a cousin on his mother's side, but we hear little of his studies. Counsellor Sandels speaks of "the thoughtful care which was bestowed on his education," and that he speaks truly we cannot doubt, knowing what we do of the father.

Upsala, where the free, happy days of his boyhood were passed, was at that time a city of some five thousand inhabitants, and its cathedral was reckoned the finest Gothic building in the north of Europe. Within its walls many monarchs had been crowned in days of yore, and many also lay buried. We can fancy the lad wandering through the aisles and meditating upon vanished greatness; or listening with the other members of the family to the daily service, in which the father often took part. This service was not so cold and lifeless as Protestant services were, at this period, in some other countries, for the Lutheran church

retained many of the less objectionable usages of Rome. A portrait of Jesper Swedberg shows him sitting at a table with a folio Bible before him opened at a doubtless favourite text, 1 Cor. xvi. 22, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha"; while above the precious Book hangs a crucifix. Through an open door, over which stands a cross, we have a vista of a church interior terminating in an altar with lights burning before it, and an altar-piece above. Such things would shock many a modern Protestant.

We can imagine the interest with which Emanuel would watch the building of his father's "large new stone house" in the square;<sup>1</sup> and the impression made upon his youthful mind by the terrible fire which shortly after it was finished, destroyed not only it, but many other buildings, including the grand cathedral itself.

Another circumstance that must have left its mark upon his memory was the death of his mother two years earlier; and this sad event was followed by the loss of his elder

<sup>1</sup> The account of the building of this house given in the Swedish *Biographiskt Lexicon* throws a very pleasing light upon the character of Swedenborg's father. "It is interesting," says the writer, "to hear him speak about the building of this new house. 'I know, and I can testify—for I was always present—that not the least work was done, that not a stone was raised, with sighs or a troubled mind, but all was done cheerfully and gladly. No complaint, no hard or disagreeable word was heard, no scoldings and no oaths were uttered.' When the house was finished in the autumn of 1698, he inaugurated it by inviting and entertaining all the poor of the town. He and his wife and children waited upon them. Everything was done in an orderly manner, and this feast of charity was concluded with singing, prayer, thanksgiving, and mutual blessing." We may assume that Swedenborg, who was then ten years of age, took his share in this kindly entertainment.

brother a few weeks later. Of the remaining children (seven besides himself), his sister Anna, sixteen months his senior, seems to have been his favourite. Before she had completed her seventeenth year, she was married to Dr Ericus Benzeliuss, Librarian to the University of Upsala; but she was not lost to her fond brother. It was about this time that he entered upon his college course, and the probability is, though direct evidence is wanting, that he resided with her until he left the University in 1709; for his father removed to Skara in 1702, on his appointment to the bishopric. We know practically nothing of his doings during these years. He certainly did not waste his time; but there is no record of his having gained any important distinction. Counsellor Sandels says that he made "the best use of advantages enjoyed, comparatively, by few," and describes the academical disputation which he published, with the permission of the authorities, on leaving his *alma mater* as "a clever work for a youth." One thing he had learnt; to write passable Latin verse. After leaving the University he published some of his efforts in that direction, which manifested, says Sandels, "a remarkable readiness of wit, and showed that he had made a good use of his time in youth." He continued to exercise this faculty for some years, and was looked upon in his family circle as something of a poet.

Having done with tutors, lectures and class-books, he retired for a time to Brunsbo, the episcopal residence near Skara, where he began to make plans for an extended foreign tour. The difficulty seems to have been to raise the means, his father having little wealth and many responsibilities, and being withal somewhat "near." Under date of 13th July 1709, he writes to

his brother-in-law Benzeliuss, begging his assistance in carrying out his project.<sup>1</sup> He also desired his recommendation to some English college where he might improve himself in mathematics, physics and natural history. He proposed to prepare for his own use a summary of the principal discoveries in mathematics during the recent centuries, to which he would add anything new he might learn in his travels.

In this same letter he tells his brother-in-law that he has acquired the art of bookbinding from a man who had been working for his father. I mention this as characteristic of his industrious and practical nature. Wherever he went in his later travels he endeavoured to gain a knowledge of useful trades. Writing from London in 1711, he says: "I also turn my lodgings to some use, and change them often; at first I was at a watchmaker's, afterwards at a cabinet-maker's, and now I am at a mathematical instrument maker's; from them I steal their trades, which some day will be of use to me." He learnt to make brass instruments; and at Leyden, later, to grind glass for lenses, etc., that he might furnish himself with appliances that he could not afford to buy. His brother-in-law had commissioned him, when in England, to procure some globes for the University library at Upsala, but these proving too expensive, and difficult to convey safely, he was asked to obtain the printed sheets that they might be mounted in Sweden. The makers, however, refused to supply them; so young Swedberg applied himself to learn engraving, and prepared the sheets himself.

But we are anticipating. It was a full year after his application to Benzeliuss for assistance that he was

<sup>1</sup> Swedenborg's correspondence with Benzeliuss will be found in Dr R. L. Tafel's *Documents*, vol. i. pp. 200-344.



enabled to start upon his travels ; a year of disappointment and impatient waiting for something to turn up. Not a happy time for one of Emanuel's active disposition ; especially when he met with discouragement in his favourite studies at home. The busy, practical bishop was probably as little appreciative of mathematics as he was of metaphysics ; and certainly he would look with disapproval on a life of idleness, or of no definite occupation, in a young man of twenty-two. There can be no doubt the son was unhappy. On the 6th of March 1710, he writes to Benzeliuſ, the one great friend of his early life :

"I have little desire to remain here much longer ; for I am wasting almost my whole time. Still, I have made such progress in music, that I have been able several times to take the place of our organist ; but for all my other studies this place affords me very little opportunity ; and they are not at all appreciated by those who ought to encourage me in them."

Some relief from this unsatisfactory mode of life was found in a short visit to the great Swedish engineer and inventor, Christopher Polhammar (afterwards known by his title of nobility, Polhem). With him the youth was in his element, and Polhammar appreciated his capacity. He wrote to Benzeliuſ : "We were pleased and satisfied with one another . . . ; especially when I found him able to assist me in the mechanical undertaking which I have in hand, and in making the necessary experiments ; in this matter I am more indebted to him, than he is to me. Moreover, I value more highly a quick and intelligent person, with whom I can enjoy the discussion of subjects on which I possess some little knowledge, than I do a few weeks' board and lodging."

In the autumn of 1710, we find

young Swedberg<sup>1</sup> in London ; and, from this date, his occasional letters to Dr Benzeliuſ give us a brief but interesting account of his doings for the five years of his absence from Sweden.<sup>2</sup>

His journey to London was not without perils, his life having been in danger four different times. The vessel in which he sailed was nearly wrecked on approaching the English coast ; then they were boarded by pirates ; the next evening were fired into by a British guardship, being mistaken for the same pirates ; and, finally, after arriving safely in the Thames, Swedberg narrowly escaped hanging for breaking the strict quarantine regulations, established on account of the existence of the plague in Sweden.

His first letter to Benzeliuſ from London is of great interest, and reveals not only his "immoderate desire" (to borrow his own expression from a later letter) for study, but the remarkable breadth of his sympathies.

"I study Newton daily," he says, "and am very anxious to see and hear him."<sup>3</sup> I have provided myself with a small stock of books for the study of mathematics, and also with a certain number of instruments, which are both a help and an ornament in the study of science ; such as, an astronomical tube, quadrants of several kinds, prisms, microscopes, artificial scales, and *camera obscura*, by William Hunt, and Thomas Everard, which I admire and which you too will admire. I hope that

<sup>1</sup> His name was changed to Swedenborg in 1719, when the family was ennobled.

<sup>2</sup> See *Documents Concerning Swedenborg*, vol. i. pp. 206-238.

<sup>3</sup> It does not appear that this desire was ever gratified, but he made the acquaintance in England of many notabilities, including Flamsteed, Halley and Woodward, by the last named of whom he was introduced to various members of the Royal Society, and other learned men.



after settling my accounts, I may have sufficient money left to purchase an air-pump."

Among other items of information in this letter is that "the magnificent St Paul's cathedral was finished a few days ago in all its parts." In its virginal purity, before the smoke of the great city had had time to obscure the beauty of its details, it doubtless impressed him mightily. But he was more impressed at Westminster; not by the architecture, however, upon which he does not remark. "In examining the royal monuments in Westminster abbey," he says, "I happened to see the tomb of Casaubon; when I was inspired with such a love for this literary hero, that I kissed his tomb, and dedicated to his manes, under the marble"—some Latin verses, which it is not necessary to quote.

"The town," he continues, "is distracted by internal dissensions between the Anglican and Presbyterian churches; they are incensed against each other with almost deadly hatred. The torch and trumpet of this tumult is Doctor Sacheverell, whose name is heard from every mouth and at every corner; and respecting whom every bookshop displays pamphlets."

Of his studies in England, mathematics and astronomy seem to have absorbed most of his interest. "I visit daily," he writes (April 1711), "the best mathematicians here in town. I have been with Flamsteed, who is considered the best astronomer in England, and who is constantly taking observations." In a letter written at the end of 1711, or beginning of 1712, he reports conversations he has had with Flamsteed, and sends a list of the latter's publications, for which Benzelius had asked. He also speaks enthusiastically of his own growing knowledge and hopes of attainment.

"With regard to astronomy," he

says, "I have made such progress in it, as to have discovered much which I think will be useful in its study. Although in the beginning it made my brain ache, yet long speculations are now no longer difficult for me. I examined closely all propositions for finding the terrestrial longitude, but could not find a single one; I have therefore originated a method by means of the moon, which is unerring, and I am certain that it is the best which has yet been advanced. In a short time I will inform the Royal Society that I have a proposition to make on this subject, stating my points. If it is favourably received by these gentlemen, I shall publish it here; if not, in France. I have also discovered many new methods for observing the planets, the moon, and the stars; that which concerns the moon and its parallaxes, diameter, and inequality, I will publish whenever an opportunity arises. I am now busy working my way through algebra and the higher geometry, and I intend to make such progress in it, as to be able in time to continue Polhammar's discoveries."

The young student's scientific and literary friends in Sweden often availed themselves of his assistance while he was abroad. At one time it is to procure some out-of-the-way books for the university library; at another, to purchase scientific instruments, or to ascertain the most approved method of using these. For his brother-in-law he obtained lenses for a twenty-four-foot telescope, a microscope, and many books, to procure which latter he had to ransack the bookshops and attend auction sales; not, for him, an uncongenial task. The Literary Society of Upsala, also, gave him a number of commissions and instructions, through one of its members, Professor Elfvius, especially enjoin-

ing him to watch Flamsteed's method of taking observations, the nature of his instruments, etc. etc. After detailing numerous other requests, the professor concludes one of his letters:

"I recommend the above, and everything else that may be of use in our mathematical studies, to Mr Swedberg's great desire of acquiring knowledge, etc." <sup>1</sup>

Mr Swedberg good-naturedly fulfilled his friends' commissions to the best of his ability, and added to the obligations they thus incurred by volunteering further information and suggestions of his own. He advised the purchase of the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society, also John Lowth's (? Lowthrop's) digest of the same, Harris' *Lexicon of the Sciences and Arts*, *The Memoirs of Literature*, several of Sir Isaac Newton's works, and other books. He mentions the publication of Grabe's *Septuagint*, and one or two other theological works; but this is almost the only indication that he took any interest in theology at that time. As a relief from his severer studies, he continued to write poetry, and did not despise the study of English models. He mentions as "eminent English poets, that are well worth reading for the sake of their imagination alone," Dryden, Spenser, Waller, Milton, Cowley, Beaumont and Fletcher, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Oldham, Benham, Philip (? Ambrose Philips),

<sup>1</sup> One interesting point upon which Elfvius desired information was as to what Englishmen thought of Newton's *Principia*, which had been before the public something more than twenty years at that time. He himself was not prepared to accept the theory of gravitation, which seemed to him to be "a mere abstraction" and "an absurdity." Swedberg's reply was very guarded. "In this matter," he wrote, "no Englishman ought to be consulted, *quia cæcutit in suis*, i.e. because he is blind about his own; yet it would be criminal to doubt them."

Smith, and others; so that for a foreigner he must have had a considerable acquaintance with English literature.

The young man spent upwards of a year in London and Oxford, losing no opportunity of acquiring knowledge. His travels and studies must have involved considerable expense, which his father does not seem to have been too generous in providing for. He was, in fact, at this time, spending all available money on his own enterprises, and so had little consideration for the lonely and penurious student. As a dutiful son, Emanuel does not chide loudly, but he raises a mild complaint from time to time. "I am on short allowance," he tells Benzelius (April 1711), "and am not permitted to purchase anything on credit." He writes from Oxford: "I have longed very much to see the Bodleian Library, since I saw the little one at Zion College; but I am kept back here on account of 'want of money.' I wonder my father does not show greater care for me, than to have let me live now for more than sixteen months upon 250 rixdalers; <sup>1</sup> well knowing that I promised in a letter not to incommode him by drawing for money; and yet none has been forthcoming for the last three or four months. It is hard to live without food or drink like some poor drudge in Schonen." Again: "Your great kindness, and your favour, of which I have had so many proofs, make me believe that your advice and your letters will induce my father to be so favourable towards me, as to send me the funds which are necessary for a young man, and which will infuse into me new spirit for the prosecution of my studies. Believe me, I desire and strive to be an honour to my father's house and yours, much more strongly than you yourself can wish and endeavour."

<sup>1</sup> Something less than £50.

It is to be regretted that these letters are so few and far between ; many are evidently missing. Writing from Paris in August 1713, he refers to a letter he had sent from Holland, whither he went from England, but which is not forthcoming. All that we hear of his stay in that country is from a short reference in this Paris letter.

"During my stay in Holland I was most of the time in Utrecht, where the Diet met, and where I was in great favour with Ambassador Palmquist, who had me every day at his house ; every day, also, I had discussions on algebra with him. He is a good mathematician, and a great algebraist. He wished me not to go away ; and, therefore, I intend next year to return to Leyden, where they have a splendid observatory, and the finest brass quadrant I have ever seen ; it cost 2000 new guilders. They are continually making new observations. I will ask permission from the university to take observations there for two or three months, which I shall easily obtain ; Palmquist said the same."

Of his doings in Paris, also, we have but a very meagre record. He met there De La Hire, Warrignon, the Abbé Bignon (a member of the Academy and afterwards Royal Librarian), besides other notables. He observes that :

"Between the mathematicians here and the English there is great emulation and jealousy. Halley, of Oxford, told me that he was the first who examined the variation of the pendulum under the equator ; they keep silence about this here ; the astronomers here also maintain that Cassini's paper was written before Halley made his expedition to the Island of St Helena, and so forth."

In Paris and its neighbourhood he spent nearly a year. On leaving, he posted to Hamburg, *viâ* Lille, and thence into Pomerania, at that time

a Swedish province. We hear of him, in his next letter, at Rostock ; from which place he sends his brother-in-law a long list of inventions he has either completed or projected. One wonders what some of these were like, and whether the young inventor anticipated the mechanical contrivances of the present age in the same way as in later years he anticipated scientific theories that are usually regarded as strictly modern.

The first of these inventions was "the plan of a certain ship, which with its men was to go under the surface of the sea, wherever it chooses, and do great damage to the fleet of the enemy." Another was a device for raising ships with their cargoes by means of sluices, where there is no fall of water. Yet another, which from description seems like an incipient steam engine, for setting mill wheels in motion under similar circumstances — *i.e.* when falling water was not available ; "the wheel will nevertheless revolve by means of the fire, which will put the water in motion." A magazine air-gun to discharge sixty or seventy shots in succession, without reloading ; and a flying machine, were further projects of his active brain. The idea of a flying machine he returned to again later ; but Polhem seems to have thrown cold water on his schemes, expressing his opinion that "with respect to flying by artificial means, there is perhaps the same difficulty as in making a *perpetuum mobile* or gold by artificial means ; although, at first sight, it seems as easy to be done as it is desirable."

His method for finding the terrestrial longitude by means of the moon he regarded as the most important of his early discoveries. Though it was not taken up sympathetically by the learned of his day, he always insisted that it was



"the only one that can be given, that it is also the easiest, and in fact the right one." His confidence in it was so great that he republished his pamphlet several times between 1712 and 1766.

In this Rostock letter, he expresses a very great desire to return home to Sweden; nevertheless he stayed on in Pomerania for another nine months, most of the time at the little university town of Greifswalde. What kept him there, unless it was the presence of the king at Stralsund, and a hope that possibly his services might in some way be called upon, it is hard to say; for he had a very poor opinion of the university and its faculty. "There is nothing of much interest," he said, "to be found in Greifswalde, which—you will excuse me for saying—is quite a paltry university. Papke is the professor of mathematics, fit for anything rather than for this science."

At Greifswalde young Swedberg printed a collection of poetical fables in Latin, dealing with the political affairs of his time, under the title of "*Camena Borea cum Heroum et Heroidum factis ludens: sive Fabellæ Ovidianis similis cum variis nominibus.*" He had been employed upon this for some time as a mental recreation.

The young student's long wanderings were drawing to an end. We can only regret that more of his correspondence at this time, and his own journal, especially, have not been preserved to us. His few letters to Benzelius, from which I have drawn so largely, are full of interest, not only for their record of his studies and achievements, but for the revelation they give of his personal character. White said that he could "discover no friendships in Swedenborg's life." For Benzelius he certainly entertained a very warm regard, and he was deeply attached to his sister Anna; every letter ex-

presses his affection to both, and to his "little brother" (nephew) Eric. A very characteristic touch is found in the letter from Rostock (6th September 1714). He writes: "I have a great longing to see little brother Eric again; perhaps he will be able to make a triangle, or to draw one for me, when I give him a little ruler." "Little brother Eric" was nine years old at this time. His interest in the child continued, and a few years later he wrote: "I hear that his love for mechanics and drawing continues. If he can give the slip to his preceptor, I should like to induce him to follow me; when I would try in every way to promote his welfare, to instruct him in mathematics and other things, should it be desired" It appears that "little brother Eric" did follow his uncle, entering the College of Mines under his auspices in 1726. On 13th July 1725, his father writes to Swedenborg: "I acknowledge with all due respect the favour which you have shown towards my Ericus, and which he has received in so many ways from you in Stockholm, both by instruction in physics and mathematics, and more recently by a new present." Eric was now twenty years of age.

But we are again anticipating events. Emanuel's stay at Greifswalde was cut short by the arrival of the allied enemies of Sweden before Stralsund, where the king was shut up, and which was only fifteen miles distant. "When the siege was about to commence," he says, "I succeeded, under the Divine Providence, in obtaining a passage home in a yacht, in company with Madame Feiff (presumably the wife of the Councillor of War), after having been abroad for more than four years" (nearly five, in fact). Warm work was in prospect around Stralsund, making its neighbourhood unfitted for ladies or students.

## CHAPTER III

## SCIENTIFIC STUDIES AND PRACTICAL UNDERTAKINGS

ANOTHER period of weary waiting and discouragement followed young Swedberg's return to his native country. Full of new ideas and enthusiasm, he thought that some career would surely open to him now. He had many schemes for his country's good, and the enlargement of his own reputation, and was by no means idle; but his efforts to advance the material welfare of Sweden, and to raise her scientific status among the nations, were blocked at all points by conservatism, vested interests, indifference, and want of funds, in the same way as his father's attempts at educational and ecclesiastical reforms were frustrated.

His very first undertaking was in connection with his new method of finding the longitude. "The day after to-morrow," he writes to Benzelius, under date, 9th August 1715, "I will travel to the Kinnekulle [mountain], to select a spot for a small observatory, where I intend, towards winter, to make some observations respecting our horizon, and to lay a foundation for those observations, by which my invention on the longitude of places may be confirmed."

He visits the Board of Mines, and observes that the models "are going to ruin as time advances. After six or ten years they will only be good for fire-wood, unless I choose to prevent that destiny by means of a little brass, a little ink, and some paper." Ten years later, when he had a share in the responsibility for the property of the Board, he applied for and obtained an appropriation of fifty silver dalers for the repairs of these models, showing that

his concern was not simply that of an outside critic.

After his sojourn in more advanced and enlightened countries, he naturally felt the backwardness of his own. He had two great schemes to remedy this. One was the formation of a "Society for Learning and Science," a sort of Swedish Royal Society; the other was the foundation of a Chair of Mechanics at the University of Upsala. He hammered away at this latter idea for years, but without success. His first suggestion was that the existing professors should give up a seventh part of their emoluments, so as to afford an income of 3000 silver dalers for the support of the new faculty. This proposal naturally met with opposition, and the enthusiastic student afterwards explained that he had meant it more in jest than in earnest; but he had another suggestion ready, which was to reduce the number of professorships in other subjects by not filling up vacancies. "It could be done with the greatest ease," he said, "by dispensing with some of the professorships that are least necessary, *e.g.*, in course of time one professorship might be spared both from theology and medicine, and the professorship of Oriental languages might be transferred either to a professorship of theology, or to the professorship of Greek; so also that of morals might be transferred to the professorship of history; especially as there are few universities where there are so many professorships established."<sup>1</sup>

The bent of Swedenborg's mind was always practical, both as a man of science and as a religious teacher; he could not understand how anyone could contentedly rest in mere theory. At the time we are now dealing with, his brother-in-law, Benzelius, was exerting himself to get an astronomical observatory

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 254.

established at Upsala, and received his warm support in the matter. Other people, however, were not so enthusiastic. "I wonder at your friends, the mathematicians," he wrote, "who have lost all energy and desire to follow up so clever a design, as the one you pointed out to them of the building of an astronomical observatory. It is a fatality with mathematicians that they remain mostly in theory. I have thought that it would be a profitable thing if to ten mathematicians there was added one thoroughly practical man, by whom the others could be led to market; in which case this one man would gain more renown and be of more use than all the ten together."<sup>1</sup>

A young man of this disposition could not rest unoccupied. While awaiting the course of events, he started a scientific and technical journal, under the title of "*Dædalus Hyperboreus*." By advice of Benzelius he dedicated it to the King, Charles XII., who professed much interest in the work. First, however, the means of publishing it had to be found, and he appealed to Benzelius to intercede with his father for assistance. He always seemed afraid to approach the latter with demands for money; and, as he was now nearly twenty-eight, the Bishop might well think that it was time he shifted for himself. Thus he wrote to his mediator:

"A single word from you to my father about me, will be worth more than twenty thousand remonstrances from me. You can without any comment inform him of my enterprise, of my zeal in my studies; and that he need not imagine that in future I shall waste my time and, at the same time, his money. One word from another is worth more than a thousand from me. He knows very well that you have the

kindness to interest yourself in my behalf; but he knows too, that I am still more interested in my own behalf. For this reason he will distrust me more than you, my dear brother."<sup>1</sup>

All this while the Bishop was using his influence with the King and Court to find his son some employment. But Charles was too busy with other matters, and it was not until the end of the year 1716 that young Swedberg was appointed "Extraordinary Assessor" at the Board of Mines, the Department of State responsible for the supervision of the great mining industries of Sweden. His fitness for the post was attested by Polhem in a letter to Benzelius dated 10th December 1715. "I find," the great inventor wrote, "that young Swedberg is a ready mathematician, and possesses much aptitude for the mechanical sciences; and if he continues as he has begun, he will, in course of time, be able to be of greater use to the King and to his country in this than in anything else."<sup>2</sup> In another letter, he speaks of "his readiness of resources," and "his other good qualities."<sup>3</sup>

It seems that the King offered the young man three posts to choose from, before he was finally gazetted to the Board of Mines. Though no salary was attached to the office he accepted until he attained to the full Assessorship, he found the work congenial, and two years later refused the Professorship of Astronomy in the University of Upsala, assigning as his reasons: "(1) I already have an honourable post. (2) In this post I can be of use to my country, and indeed of more practical use than in any other position. (3) I thus decline a faculty which does not agree with my tastes and my turn of mind, by both of which I am led to

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 244.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 252.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. pp. 262 and 263.



mechanics, and will be in future to chemistry; and our Board" (he is writing confidentially to his brother-in-law) "is noted for having assessors who know very little on these subjects; for this reason I will endeavour to supply this deficiency, and I hope that my labours in this direction will be as profitable to them, as their own may be in another."<sup>1</sup>

There were ulterior reasons, also, for in a later letter, he writes:

"I hope I shall be able to be as useful in the post which has been entrusted to me, and also to secure myself as many advantages; my present position being only a step to a higher one, while at Upsala I should have nothing more to expect; moreover, I do not believe that the King would like me to give up my present position. With regard to the Board, I will try most diligently to make myself at home in mechanics, physics, and chemistry, and, at all events, to lay a proper foundation for everything, when I hope no one will have any longer a desire to charge me with having entered the Board, as one entirely unworthy."<sup>2</sup>

During the early part of his career at the Board of Mines, he was detached at times for special services with his friend and patron Christopher Polhem. The most important of these was the exploit connected with the siege of Frederickshall in 1718, when two galleys, five large boats, and one sloop were transported overland from Strömstadt to the Iddefjord, a distance of fourteen English miles, under Swedberg's direction.<sup>3</sup> Other works were the construction of the great dock at Carlsrona, and the scheme for con-

necting the North Sea and the Baltic by a canal; which undertaking, however, was never completed, owing to the death of the King, at whose private expense it was to be executed.

The intercourse of young Swedberg with Polhem was of a very friendly character; so much so that the latter, on the recommendation of the King, promised him his eldest daughter in marriage. From a letter of Swedberg's to his brother-in-law, Benzeliuſ, it appears that they were actually engaged; but in the end she was married to another. There was a younger sister, however, to whom the young man became strongly attached, and who in due course was formally betrothed to him. The damsel, it seems, was not consulted, or, at any rate, the match was arranged for her; and it proved that she did not really care for her fiancé. Discovering this, the latter renounced his claim, and vowed he would never allow his thoughts to settle upon any woman again; which vow he religiously observed. He left Polhem's house, and for some time ceased to communicate with any of the family.

It was a painful affair to both sides, as appears from a letter of Polhem's to Benzeliuſ, in which he speaks of the interruption of his correspondence with his protégé, and mentions the fact that three of his letters had been returned to him unopened. "I must beg you," he says, "to offer him [Emanuel] my greeting, . . . and also to ask him to favour me with one of his welcome letters, which are so much the more acceptable in our house, as he has given us sufficient cause to love him as our own son."<sup>1</sup>

The disappointed lover was evidently in a state of great dejection at this time. The light of his life had gone out, and everything looked

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 297.

<sup>3</sup> Particulars of this undertaking are given in Dr R. L. Tafel's *Documents*, vol. i. p. 554.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 306.

gloomy in consequence. He writes to Benzeliuſ (October 1718): "Among all my brothers and relatives there is not one who has entertained a kind feeling towards me, except yourſelf; and in this I was confirmed by a letter which my brother wrote to my father about my journey abroad. If I can in any way ſhow a due ſenſe of gratitude, I will always do ſo. Brother [in-law] Unge does not hold his hands away from anyone; at leaſt he has eſtranged from me my dear father's and my dear mother's affections for the laſt four years; ſtill this will probably not be to his advantage." <sup>1</sup>

Even his ſcientific purſuits were bringing him no ſatisfaction. He is diſcouraged "to find that [his] mathematical diſcoveries were conſidered as novelties which the country could not ſtand. I wiſh," he adds, "I had ſome more of theſe novelties, ay, a novelty in literary matters for every day in the year, ſo that the world might find pleaſure in them. There are enough in one century who plod on in the old beaten track, while there are ſcarcely ſix or ten in a whole century, who are able to generate novelties which are based upon argument and reaſon." <sup>2</sup>

Among the novelties, which his lethargic fellow-countrymen were ſlow to adopt, were his plan for an aſtronomical obſervatory, and the foundation of a profeſſorſhip of mechanics, already mentioned; a ſcheme for the extenſive manufacture of ſalt in Sweden; a new ſlow-combuſtion ſtove; a new method of diſcovering mineral veins; a decimal ſyſtem of coinage and meaſures, etc. "Speculations and arts like theſe," he ſays, "are left to ſtarve in Sweden, where they are looked upon by a ſet of political

blockheads as ſcholastic matters, which muſt remain in the background, while their own ſuppoſed refined ideas and their intrigues occupy the foreground." <sup>1</sup>

In another letter he writes: "It ſeems to me there is little reward for the trouble of advancing the cauſe of ſcience; partly on account of the lack of funds, which prevents our going as far into it as we ought, and partly alſo on account of the jealousy which is excited againſt thoſe who busy themſelves more than other perſons with a given ſubject. Whenever a country leans towards barbariſm, it is vain for one or two perſons to try to keep it upright." <sup>2</sup>

In ſending Benzeliuſ his treatiſe on the decimal ſyſtem, he renews his complaint of neglect and lack of appreciation. "This is the laſt," he vows, "that I will publiſh myſelf, becauſe *quotidiana et domeſtica vileſcunt*, and becauſe I have already worked myſelf poor by them. I have been ſinging long enough; let us ſee whether anyone will come forward, and hand me ſome bread in return." Deſpairing of recognition at home he propoſes to go abroad and ſeek his fortune as a mining engineer. "For he is nothing ſhort of a fool," he exclaims, "who is independent and at liberty to do as he pleaſes, and ſees an opportunity for himſelf abroad, and yet remains at home in darkneſs and cold, where the Furies, Envy, and Pluto have taken up their abode, and diſpoſe the rewards, and where labours ſuch as I have performed are rewarded with miſery. The only thing I would deſire until that time come, is *bene latere* (i.e. to find a ſequeſtered place where I can live ſequeſtered from the world); I think I may find ſuch a corner in the end, either at Starbo or at Skin-

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 294.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 301.

[skatte] berg.”<sup>1</sup> (At these places he had a partnership in mines and iron-works, inherited from his mother’s and stepmother’s families.)

It was not empty honours that the young man sought; for he and his brothers and sisters had been ennobled by the Queen (Ulrica Eleonora) some six months before this melancholy letter was written. This honour gave him, as the eldest son, a seat in the House of Nobles in the Swedish Diet; and was signalled in the usual way by a change in the family name from Swedberg to Swedenborg, by which name we shall hereafter know him.

If it was honour he sought, he might have been satisfied with the distinguished favour shown him by Sweden’s famous King, Charles XII. He had frequent and intimate intercourse with his Majesty, who condescended to read his “*Dædalus*,” to discuss mathematics with him, and to accept his personal assistance in various ways. He writes from Wenersberg, 14th September 1718:

“Every day I had some mathematical matters for His Majesty, who deigned to be pleased with all of them. When the eclipse took place, I took His Majesty out to see it, and talked much to him about it. This, however, is a mere beginning. I hope in time to be able to do something in this quarter for the advancement of science; but I do not wish to bring anything forward now, except what is of immediate use. His Majesty found considerable fault with me for not having continued my *Dædalus* (which ceased with the sixth number), but I pleaded want of means; of which he does not like to hear. I expect some assistance for it very soon.”

These fond hopes were never realised. The King was busy with warlike enterprises, and these, too,

were brought to a sudden end by his death at the siege of Frederickshall on the 30th of the following November.

The loss of his royal patron, his unfortunate love affair, his estrangement from his family, and the indifference of nearly everyone to his aims and interests, may well have produced a melancholy state of mind. He did not emigrate, however, as he threatened, but in the summer of 1721 he started upon a lengthened foreign tour, his ostensible object being to study the mines and manufactures of other countries that he might render still higher services to his own in his appointed office.

His original plan was to visit Holland, England, France, Italy, Hungary and Germany; but the tour was chiefly confined to Holland and the German States. He visited all the mines in Saxony and the Hartz mountains, and was entertained in a princely manner by Duke Ludwig Rudolph of Brunswick-Luneburg, who not only paid all his expenses, but presented him on parting with a gold medal and a large silver coffee-pot, besides bestowing upon him other marks of favour.

While on this tour he published several scientific and speculative works. At Amsterdam a treatise on chemistry and physics,<sup>1</sup> *Observations on Iron and Fire*,<sup>2</sup> and a work on the construction of docks and dykes;<sup>3</sup> at Leipsic “*Miscellaneous Observations*” on geology, mineralogy, etc.<sup>4</sup> It speaks for the backward condition of things in Sweden that Swedenborg found it necessary to publish most

<sup>1</sup> *Prodromus Principiorum Rerum Naturalium*, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Nova Observata et Inventa circa Ferrum et Ignem*, etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Artificia nova mechanica Receptacula Navalia et Aggeros Aquaticos construendi*, etc.

<sup>4</sup> *Miscellanea Observata circa Res Naturales*, etc.

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Eric Benzelius*, 1st December 1719.



of his works abroad ; partly on account of expense, partly that they might be better printed, and partly to escape the criticism of the Press Censor, whose views were apt to be narrow. When he published his treatise on Algebra (the first in the Swedish language) he questioned his brother-in-law as to whether there was anyone in Upsala who knew enough of the subject to read his proofs for him !

In July 1722, we find Swedenborg at home again, full of new projects for enhancing the material prosperity of his native land ; projects to be met as before with scant encouragement and not a little active opposition from interested parties, easy-going conservatives, and jealous officials. Among the latter must be reckoned Urban Hjärne, Vice-President of the Board of Mines, who had an old quarrel with Swedenborg's father, and made the young man uncomfortable at times in consequence.

As the outcome of his studies and observations abroad Swedenborg laid before the Board, and also before the King direct, proposals for increasing the yield of copper from the ore, for improvements in the manufacture of steel, and to abolish the foolish distinction made between the " noble " and " ignoble " metals, so as to give encouragement to the manufacture of iron, " the interests of copper being protected at the expense of the iron interest." On these, as on other such matters, he held large and liberal views, as witness his opinion of trade secrets. Speaking of the difficulty he sometimes had in gathering information abroad, he writes to Benzelius : " According to my simple notions, there ought to be no secrets at all in metallurgy ; for without such knowledge it is impossible for anyone to investigate nature." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Documents, vol. i. p. 336.

On 15th July 1724, Swedenborg, being then thirty-six years of age, was appointed an ordinary assessor of the Board of Mines, with a salary of 800 silver dalers. It was not until 1730, however, that he received the full salary of 1200 dalers, so that he was but meanly paid for his great services. From the records of the Board he appears to have been assiduous in his duties, and the value of his labours was recognised on several occasions by his colleagues. But his official work was only a small part of his employment ; he was constantly gathering material for further publications, and by the beginning of 1733 he had the manuscript of several important scientific and philosophical works ready for the Press. He petitioned for nine months leave of absence that he might get them printed at Dresden and Leipsic, which was granted by Royal Decree.

The works in question were his *Opera Philosophica et Mineralia*, three heavy folio volumes with numerous copper - plates, and a treatise on *The Infinite*. An analysis of these works would be out of place here, even if the present writer felt himself capable of dealing with them ; but a brief account of them will be found in Dr Wilkinson's *Biographical Sketch*, pp. 28-34 (Edition 1886), in the same writer's *Popular Sketch of Swedenborg's Philosophical Works* (which, however, is out of print), in White's *Life* (vol. i. chapters ix. and x.), and in Worcester's *Life and Mission*. The first part of the *Opera Philosophica*, entitled *Principia Rerum Naturalium*, etc., was translated into English by the Rev. Augustus Clissold, M.A., a clergyman of the Church of England, and published in two volumes in 1846 ; and the treatise on *The Infinite* has also appeared in an English dress. Portions of the second part of the *Opera Phil-*

*osophica* dealing with the manufacture of iron and steel were reprinted during Swedenborg's life-time both in France and Germany.

The publication of these works won for Swedenborg a European reputation, and brought him into correspondence with some of the leading scientists and philosophers of the day. The Academy of Sciences of St Petersburg invited him to become a corresponding member in 1734, and he was one of the first elected members of the Royal Academy of his own country. In the course of his journeyings he visited again his former patron, the Duke of Brunswick, who received him cordially, and undertook the whole cost of publication of the *Opera Philosophica*.

Swedenborg has left us a somewhat detailed account of the journey he undertook for the purpose of publishing these works; a matter-of-fact document, and somewhat dull reading, it must be confessed, but presenting many points of interest. It proves the truth of what Counsellor Sandels said,<sup>1</sup> that "nothing ever escaped him that merited the attention of a traveller."

"It would be too prolix," says Swedenborg, "to mention all the learned men I visited, and with whom I became acquainted during these journeys, since I never missed an opportunity of doing so, nor of seeing and examining libraries, collections, and other objects of interest."<sup>2</sup>

His observations extend from such important matters as the fortifications of a town to the method of constructing fences in Schonen. Wherever he goes he visits the libraries, museums, picture galleries, churches, monasteries, asylums, theatres, and especially manufac-

tories. He has remarks upon mining; blast furnaces; vitriol, arsenic, and sulphur works; naval architecture; copper and tin manufactures; paper mills; plate glass and mirrors; as well as upon anatomy, astronomy, magnetism, hydrostatics, literature, and the social condition of the people among whom he finds himself. Some of his observations are worth quoting.

"At Anclam," he says, "I saw for the first time the Brandenburg soldiers [Frederick the Great's famous Grenadiers]. . . . The men are tall and slender, and they march erectly. . . . They go through their drill with the greatest promptness and regularity; but their manner is perhaps a little theatrical. Their line is remarkably regular, the men being of the same height and age; the faces of all turn in one direction. . . . The whole squadron is like a machine placed there, and moving instantaneously at the pleasure of the machinist. Not even the slightest inaccuracy can be detected. If they displayed the same uniformity in battle as in drill, they would conquer Alexander's army, and subject a great part of Europe to Prussia, but——"

What lay behind this "but" we cannot guess; we gather, however, from some of his observations that Swedenborg did not altogether believe in the Brandenburgers. In describing their dress, he remarks on its closely fitting to their legs and arms, so as not to embarrass them, in attack or *in flight*. We must remember that he was a Swede, and had known Charles XII.

His acquaintance with this monarch taught him how culture and science languish under a military régime. The condition of the Royal Library in Berlin, therefore, could have given him little surprise. The books, he says, were "mostly old; not many are purchased at the

<sup>1</sup> Sandel's *Eulogium* (*Documents*, vol. i. p. 20).

<sup>2</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 6.

present time, no money being obtainable for this purpose." He remarks that most of the books are old in the Ambrosian Library at Milan, the Vatican, and the Library of San Lorenzo, Florence, also, but without the same explanation. He was essentially a modern man, whose nature was to look forward rather than backward, and so he took little interest in things from an antiquarian point of view. He was inspired by the new-born love of science and free thought, and was eager to study their latest developments. Hence he cared little for missals and breviaries, rare editions and "black letters"; the Ambrosian Library, he said, "is of little value, as it contains only old books." He made one exception, however, in favour of Biblical codices, which he examined with interest.

In matters of religion he was particularly observant, visiting churches, both Catholic and Protestant, orthodox and unorthodox; conversing with priests, monks and laymen; and regarding with charitable, though critical eyes, all developments of the religious instinct. He frequently remarks on the impressiveness of the Roman ritual, at the same time noting its sensuous character. Swedenborg's father had been accused of pietism; he himself was fully alive to the evils of forced religious sentiment. "The town" (of Copenhagen), he remarks, "is infected with pietism or quakerism; and they are crazed enough to believe that it is well pleasing to God to do away with oneself and others; of which many instances are on record."

In many ways Swedenborg showed a broader and more open mind than his father. The latter looked with little favour on the stage, and complained to the King on one occasion that money was being paid to actors and actresses, which might have

been devoted to the restoration of his ruined cathedral. Swedenborg, on the other hand, continually visited the theatres and opera-houses, and criticised the performances there. He even descends to such details as to tell us that the best harlequins come from Bergamo. Still he was in no sense a man of pleasure; wherever he went he had humanity in view, and, in a sense, the theatre was as sacred to him as the church.

It must be admitted that our hero was not a connoisseur of art. His remarks on painting and sculpture show an astonishing ignorance of the greatest men, and a want of appreciation of what is admirable in art. This ignorance he shared with most of his contemporaries; or, indeed, derived from them, for his judgment was chiefly formed by reading, and the taste of the time was false in the extreme.

He was a man of his time, also, in that he showed little appreciation of natural scenery. He tells us of the hidden wealth of the mountains, but not of their outward glory and majesty; he describes his journeys by sea and river, but never a word of the dancing waves and changing light that give endless variety to the one, or the windings that bring ever new beauties to view on the other; he notes the careful construction of the fences, but sees not the flowers of the field that they enclose; he is struck by "an extraordinarily fine illumination" at Leghorn, but disregards the rising and the setting of the sun. His thoughts were engaged with the nature and origin of things rather than their appearances; he was full of awe and reverence for the wonders of creation, but his æsthetic faculty was dormant or untrained. He was at this period essentially a man of science and practical affairs; though new faculties were rapidly developing within him.



## CHAPTER IV

## POET AND PHILOSOPHER

SWEDENBORG, as I have already mentioned, wrote some verse in his youth, dealing both with mythological and modern subjects, which was not wanting in merit; but it is not on account of this that I have ventured to designate him a poet. It was not the myths of ancient times, nor the deeds of living men, that roused the poetic faculty in him; but an awed contemplation of the cosmos, and profound investigation into the secrets of nature in all departments of knowledge. Moved by these things, he ventured into the regions of speculation, and rose at times, both in the sublimity of his ideas and the felicity of the language in which he expressed them, into the proper domain of poetry, though he wrote no longer in verse.

To this middle period of his life belong three works, the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, *The Animal Kingdom*, and *The Worship and Love of God*. Before considering their contents, we will follow him in the journeys he undertook to gather material and to publish these works, of which journeys we fortunately possess some brief but most interesting records.<sup>1</sup>

On the 10th of July 1736, he left Stockholm, travelling by way of Norköping and Helsingborg to Copenhagen, where he spent some time, and met many learned and otherwise noted persons, some of whom were acquainted with his previous works and gratified him by speaking favourably of them. There, and elsewhere, he visited many places of interest, such as the great dry dock then in process of construction at Copenhagen, porcelain works at Hamburg, etc. etc. Al-

though he was preparing for flights into the highest regions of human thought, he maintained his old interest in the practical affairs of life, as he did, indeed, to the very end.

An important note announces that he has commenced the study of Christian von Wolf's Philosophical works; and he remarks with evident satisfaction that the author seems to make reference to himself in one of them. He had made the acquaintance of Wolf shortly before this, and the two philosophers corresponded from time to time.

We get a curious bit of information concerning Osnabrück, a town which contained three Roman Catholic and two Evangelical churches, to the effect that "they have alternately a Catholic and an Evangelical bishop"; an extraordinary and impossible arrangement, it would seem.

At Amsterdam he is struck by the avarice of the people—"the whole town breathed of nothing but gain"; and he speculates as to the cause of the wonderful prosperity of the Dutch. "I here considered," he says, "why it was that it has pleased our Lord to bless such an uncouth and avaricious people with such a splendid country; why He has preserved them for such a long time from all misfortunes; has caused them to surpass all other nations in commerce and enterprise; and made their country a place whither most of the riches not only of Europe, but also of other places flow. The principal cause seems to me to have been that it is a republic, wherein the Lord delights more than in monarchical countries; as appears also from Rome. The result is that no one deems himself obliged and in duty bound to accord honour and veneration to any human being, but considers the low as well as the high to be of the same worth and conse-

<sup>1</sup> See *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 75 *et seq.*

quence as a king and emperor ; as is also shown by the native bent and disposition of everyone in Holland. The only one for whom they entertain a feeling of veneration is the Lord, putting no trust in flesh ; and when the Highest is revered most, and no human being is in His place, it is most pleasing to the Lord. Besides, each enjoys his own free will, and from this his worship of God flows ; for each is, as it were, his own king and ruler under the government of the Highest ; and from this it follows again that they do not, out of fear, timidity, and excess of caution, lose their courage and their independent rational thought, but in full freedom and without being borne down, they are able to fix their souls upon, and elevate them to, the honour of the Highest, who is unwilling to share His worship with any other. At all events, those minds that are borne down by a sovereign power are brought up in flattery and falsity ; they learn how to speak and act differently from what they think ; and when this condition has become inrooted by habit, it engenders a sort of second nature, so that even in the worship of God such persons speak differently from what they think, and extend their flattering ways to the Lord Himself, which must be highly displeasing to Him. This seems to me the reason why they above other nations enjoy a perfect blessing ; their worshipping mammon for their God, and striving only after money, does not seem to be consistent with a constant blessing ; still there may be ten among a thousand or among ten thousand, who ward off punishment from the others, and cause them to be participants with themselves of temporal blessings."

Remarkable sentiments these for one who had enjoyed the confidence of several monarchs, and to whom "Their Majesties at Carlsberg" had

been "very gracious" only a few weeks before, on his taking leave of them to proceed on this same journey ; whose father, moreover, had been a staunch upholder of the "divine right" : but Swedenborg always formed his own judgments, and did not fear to express them.

From Amsterdam our traveller went to Rotterdam, Dort and Antwerp ; thence by "treckschuyt" (canal boat) to Brussels, a portion of the journey which roused him to unwonted enthusiasm. "It was a splendid and most beautiful trip. During the whole journey we had plantations of trees on both sides ; people also were more civilised, so that in contrast with their politeness the boorishness and heaviness of the Dutch became very evident." It was doubtless pleasant travelling, the "treckschuyt" being a capacious vessel, "forty ells long, and six ells wide, with five rooms, *i.e.*, cabin, kitchen, and other apartments," while "on the forward deck was an awning, under which people could sit."

Among his fellow-passengers were two monks, one of whom "stood on deck for four hours in one position, and during the whole of this time said his prayers devoutly." Swedenborg viewed this, as it would seem to most, excessive piety with his accustomed charity. He presumed that the prayers were for those travelling in the boat, and remarked : "Such prayers must certainly be agreeable to God, so far as they proceed from an honest and pure heart, and are offered with genuine devotion, and not in the spirit of the Pharisees."

While he was prepared to find good in everyone and in every church, he did not shut his eyes to ugly facts that came under his notice. He speaks approvingly on several occasions of the spirit of devotion apparent in the Roman

Catholic churches ; but he cannot help observing the contrast between the wealth of the Church and the wretchedness of the people. "Everywhere," he says (he is in France now), "the convents, churches, and monks are wealthiest and possess most land. The monks are fat, puffed up, and prosperous ; a whole proud army might be formed of them without their being missed ; most of them lead a lazy life ; they try more and more to make all subject to them ; they give nothing to the poor except words and blessings, and, on the other hand, insist on having everything from the indigent for nothing. Of what use are these Franciscan monks ? Others again are slim, lean, supple ; they prefer walking to riding on horseback or in a carriage ; they are willing that others should enjoy themselves with them, are witty and quick at repartee, etc." Peronne, he tells us, "has many large and handsome churches," but "the houses are miserable ; the convents magnificent ; the people poor and wretched." Roye, also, "is a miserable town."

Later in his journal he explains the cause of the general poverty and gives some statistics of the ecclesiastical bodies. "I understood," he said, "that the great revenue of France obtained by the system of taxation called tithing, amounts to 32 millions [livres], or nearly 192 tons of gold, and that Paris on account of its rents contributes nearly two-thirds of that sum. In the country towns this tax, it is said, is not properly collected, as the rents are reported at a lower figure than they amount to in reality, so that scarcely three per cent. is collected. I am told besides that the ecclesiastical order possesses one-fifth of all the property in the State, and that the country will be ruined, if this goes on much longer."

"In France there are 14,777 convents and from 300,000 to 400,000 members of religious orders, who possess 9000 palaces or mansions ; 1356 abbots, 567 abbesses, 13,000 prioresses, 15,000 chaplains, 140,000 pastors and curates, 18 archbishops, and 112 bishops. 776 abbots and 280 abbesses are appointed by the king. There are also 16 heads of orders."

With all this apparatus, religion does not appear to have had much influence in public or private affairs. In enumerating the various departments of the State, he tells us that "The Comte de Maurepas, Secretary of State, transacts almost everything that concerns the affairs of the interior and the exterior, except what has reference to war ; the Comte de Florintin that which concerns religion, *which is very little*." Of the kind of theology in vogue we get an idea from an entry in his journal dated 17th October 1736. "I was in the Sorbonne, and heard their disputations in theology, which were carried on pretty well . . . ; the whole discussion consisted of syllogisms." He visited many churches and monasteries ; heard the king's chaplain preach, who "gesticulated like an actor ; yet he preached in a very superior style" ; discussed the adoration of saints with an abbé ; visited the hospitals ; attended the opening of Parliament ; and lost no opportunity of studying the life and religion of the people. He was frequently at the opera and theatres, comments upon the pieces, and mentions the distinguished actors, and actresses who took part in them.

In the midst of all this his mind was deeply occupied with his new works. Pacing in front of the Hotel de la Duchesse, he speculates on the form of the particles of the atmosphere. On 6th September, he writes : "I made the first draft to the introduction to the Transactions, viz., that the soul of wisdom is the



knowledge and acknowledgment of the Supreme Being." The next day "I treated on the subject that 'now is the time to explore nature from its effects.'" He is referring to the passage in the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, in which, after speaking of the wonderful accumulation of scientific knowledge in modern times that was waiting for some sound theory to unify and interpret it, he exclaims: "The time is at hand when we may quit the harbour and sail for the open sea. The materials are ready; shall we not build the edifice? The harvest is waiting; shall we not put in the sickle? The produce of the garden is ripe and ripe; shall we fail to collect it for use? Let us enjoy the provided banquet; that is to say, from the experience with which we are enriched, let us elicit wisdom. . . . But to branch out into this field is like embarking on a shoreless ocean that environs the world. It is easy to quit the land, or to loose the horses from the starting-post; but to attain the end or reach the goal is a labour for Hercules. Nevertheless we are bound to attempt the abyss, though as yet we must needs proceed like young birds that, with the feeble strokes of their new-fledged wings, first essay their strength, and from their nests try the air, the new world into which they are to enter."

The goal towards which our author thus buoyantly, and somewhat self-confidently, directed his steps, was nothing less than the discovery of the soul. "I intend," he says, "to examine, physically and philosophically, the whole anatomy of the body. . . . The end I propose to myself in the work is a knowledge of the soul; since this knowledge will constitute the crown of my studies. . . . In order therefore to follow up the investigation, and to solve the difficulty, I have chosen to approach by the analytic way;

and I think I am the first who has taken this course professedly.

"To accomplish this grand end I enter the circus, designing to consider and examine thoroughly the whole world or microcosm which the soul inhabits; for I think it is in vain to seek her anywhere but in her own kingdom. . . .

"I am resolved to allow myself no respite, until I have run through the whole field to the very goal, or until I have traversed the universal animal kingdom to the soul. Thus I hope, that by bending my course inwards continually, I shall open all the doors that lead to her, *and at length contemplate the soul herself: by the divine permission.*"

To attain the necessary knowledge of human anatomy was the principal object of his long sojourn abroad at this time. In Holland, France and Italy he pursued his studies, reading up the best authorities in libraries, attending lectures and demonstrations, and using, to some extent, the scalpel himself. He preferred in general, however, to accept the teaching of the great anatomists as to the facts, and to base his theories on their conclusions, for reasons explained in the following extract:—

"In the experimental knowledge of anatomy our way has been pointed out by men of the greatest and most cultivated talents, such as Eustachius, Malpighi, Ruysch, Leeuwenhock, Harvey, Morgagni, Vieussens, Lancisi, Winslow, Ridley, Boerhaave, Wepfer, Heister, Steno, Valsalva, Duverney, Nuck, Bartholin, Bidloo, and Verheyen, whose discoveries, far from consisting of fallacious, vague and empty speculations, will for ever continue to be of practical use to posterity.

"Assisted by the studies and elaborate writings of these illustrious men, and fortified by their authority, I have resolved to commence and complete *my design*; that is to say,

to open some part of those things, which it is generally supposed Nature has involved in obscurity. Here and there I have taken the liberty of throwing in the results of my own experience ; but this only sparingly, for on deeply considering the matter, I deemed it better to make use of the facts supplied by others. Indeed there are some that seem born for experimental observation, and endowed with a sharper insight than others, as if they possessed naturally a finer acumen ; such are Eustachius, Ruysch, Leeuwenhock, Lancisi, etc. There are others again who enjoy a natural faculty for contemplating facts already discovered, and eliciting their causes. Both are peculiar gifts and are seldom united in the same person. Besides I found when intently occupied in exploring the secrets of the Human Body, that as soon as I discovered anything that had not been observed before, I began (seduced probably by self-love) to grow blind to the most acute lucubrations and researches of others, and to originate a whole series of inductive arguments from my particular discovery alone ; and consequently to be incapacitated to view and comprehend, as accurately as the subject required, the idea of universals in individuals, and of individuals under universals. Nay, when I essayed to form principles from these discoveries, I thought I could detect in various other phenomena much to confirm their truth, although in reality they were fairly susceptible of no construction of the kind. I therefore laid aside my instruments and restraining my desire for making observations, determined rather to rely on the researches of others than to trust to my own." <sup>1</sup>

With this digression we turn again to the journal of Swedenborg's travels. He left Paris at three

o'clock on a March morning of 1738, and travelled by diligence and "treckschuyt" (*diligence par eau*), to Lyons, attentively observing everything on the road. Ten days later he started for Turin by way of Mont Cenis, an arduous journey in those days, and at that season of the year. "We had to undergo great fatigue," he writes, "and our lives were endangered by the snow which had fallen the previous night, which was so deep that our mules had fairly to swim in it, and we were obliged to dismount. It was fortunate that our party consisted of twelve persons besides six monks of the Carmelite order, and that we had an attendance of from fifty to sixty porters who paved a way for us." There was no Mont Cenis tunnel then !

He encountered other dangers during his Italian tour. On the journey from Turin to Milan he was abandoned by his *vetturino*, and compelled to travel in the sole company of another who was something of a desperado. He flourished a stiletto from time to time in a threatening manner, and would probably have used it had he thought Swedenborg worth robbing. On a sea journey from Leghorn to Genoa, he was again in danger from Algerian pirates.

He was in Turin at Easter (1738) and witnessed the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday processions. On the former day, he says : "I saw their magnificent processions, of which I counted nine ; altogether there were from twenty to thirty. They had a great number of large wax tapers ; six flogged themselves so that the blood streamed from their bodies ; others bore a cross of considerable weight ; others had their arms stretched out ; others, again, bore the insignia of crucifixion ; lastly, a machine furnished with a large number of candles was carried, on which Christ was represented life-size in various positions, together

<sup>1</sup> *Economy of Animal Kingdom*, Introduction, Nos. 17 and 18.

with Mary. . . . On Good Friday evening they have another great procession, with a machine, on which are Christ lying in a shroud, the head of John the Baptist, and Mary with a sword through her heart."

Swedenborg met with plenty of such outward signs of the Christian profession, but Christian morality was not so apparent among the people. In Milan he visited the *Ospedale Maggiore*, "one of the finest and largest in existence." "The service in the hospital," he tells us, "is performed entirely by bastards; for foundlings in great numbers are received in a drawer. . . . There are special halls for the wounded, for there is a great number of them, on account of the many (attempted) assassinations." He speaks highly of the general arrangements of the place.

He also visited the principal monasteries. "One which belongs to the order of Ambrosio, is splendidly decorated with paintings; one of these in the hall upstairs may be called a real *chef-d'œuvre*; if you are twelve or fifteen steps removed from it, it is impossible to think otherwise than that it stands out from the wall." (Swedenborg shared the common idea of persons of uneducated taste, that realism is the highest achievement of art). "In the garden a fig-tree was pointed out, where, it is said, Augustine was converted 1400 years ago. Each of the fathers has his domestic and valet de chambre; for they all belong to the aristocracy."

At the "large convent for young ladies," he tells us, "I conversed in the parlour with two nuns; I saw their procession and bought their flowers [kindly man!]; a young person was also led into the parlour."

On leaving Milan, he joined company with five Carmelite monks who were about to visit Venice on their way to Rome. They can hardly have entered into all his proceedings,

for at Verona, as at other places, he visited the opera. He is enthusiastic in his description of what he saw. "A new theatre," he says, "has been built with a hundred and forty boxes. In respect to the shifting of scenes in the theatre, with their decorations, which all represent beautiful palaces and other fine prospects, also in respect to the singing and dancing, they surpass the French opera to such a degree, that it seems to be mere child's play in comparison with them."

Throughout this tour we have evidence that in matters of art and taste Swedenborg was not so sound and independent in judgment as in other matters; he was imbued with the artificial ideas of his age, and when he ventured an opinion of his own, he generally betrayed his ignorance of the first principles of Art. Of the public buildings he seems to prefer the modern to the ancient, and speaks more of the precious materials of the latter than of the art displayed in their construction. Thus, at Pisa, he tells us: "Much marble is displayed in chapels, churches, and also in some private houses. Their cathedral is entirely of marble on the outside; in the interior are many handsome pictures, sculptures, and ornaments"; the cathedral of Florence he describes as having "a dome which is of marble on the outside and cost eighteen millions [of francs]." "Close by," he says, "is the Church of S. Giovanni Battista, where are sculptures in marble, and statues in bronze."

He brought to architecture the eye of the geologist rather than that of the connoisseur. At Padua, he remarks, "the town hall and the other public buildings are old-fashioned"; while of the churches at Vicenza, we learn that the "more recent" churches are especially celebrated for their architecture. His



favourite sculptor seems to have been Bernini, and he is apparently oblivious of the very greatest men. He admires the frescoes in the church of Santa Croce in Florence, because they are "so lifelike, that they seem to be in relief."

We note again his apparent insensibility to the grandeur and beauty of natural scenery. On his journey from Florence to Leghorn, he observes that "the road was fine, *but* there were mountains on both sides" (!). And yet this man was not without imagination as the works he wrote at this period evince; his imagination, however, was fed by his knowledge of natural science and of classical literature, rather than by outward impressions from the beauties of creation.

If "the proper study of mankind is man," Swedenborg certainly fulfilled his duty in this respect. While he was busy investigating the internal economy of the human frame, he was observing with equal diligence the life of the body politic, and we have many notes on social, political and religious affairs. At Florence he "witnessed the consecration of seven nuns; they were in white from top to toe. The archbishop performed the ceremony, and changed his head-covering five times; he addressed questions to them, and they answered him in musical cadence; he lay down on the floor under a black cover for a long time; afterwards they received rings, as well as crowns and other things, partook of the sacrament, and then went out in procession with crowns on their heads. Many ladies in bridal array were present, and fine music was played." Two days later (9th September 1738), he writes: "I witnessed for the third time, in a convent, the consecration of nuns; the ceremonies differed." He tells us of a remarkable monastery in Rome; "its Fathers are called

*Hierosolymi*; twelve of them are confined during the whole year; they obtain their food through a trap door; one day in the year they come out: the others meanwhile drive about in carriages."

He describes relics and other treasures in the churches in a matter-of-fact way, without raising any question of their authenticity or value as aids to devotion. Thus, in the Church of S. Giovanni in Laterano, he tells us: "Many relics are near the altar: the heads of Peter and Paul, under a rich tabernacle or shrine; a famous column of metal filled with stones from the sepulchre of Christ." In Rome, also, he "saw the prison of St Peter and St Paul; the door through which the former is said to have been led out by an angel; the stone pillar to which he was bound; the spring which issued close to it; the opening through which he obtained his food, etc." Swedenborg had special opportunities for seeing what was to be seen in Rome, through the influence of his countryman, Count Nils Bjelke, Chamberlain to the Pope, and a Senator of Rome. When, in later life, he wrote much about the Roman Catholic Church, he did not depend on mere hearsay.

It was not only ecclesiastical matters that interested him, however. At Leghorn he visited the galleys, and in Venice joined the expedition which accompanied the Doge when he performed the annual ceremony of "wedding the Adriatic."

The diary of this journey ends abruptly on the 17th of March 1739, but from other sources we learn that Swedenborg returned to Paris about the middle of May. Of his doings from that date until 3rd November 1740, when he reported himself again at the Board of Mines, we know very little, except that in the interval he published his *Œconomia Regni Animalis* at Amsterdam.

In the early part of 1743, Swedenborg again applied to the King for leave of absence to go abroad to publish a new work. His application was "graciously entertained," but a point of order required that it should first be submitted to the Board of Mines. Accordingly on the 17th of June he addressed a letter to the governing body, which is important to us for several reasons.<sup>1</sup> It shows that at this period he had no idea of his future mission, no intention of devoting himself to theology, and that the allurements of worldly honour were still before him. "I can assure you," he writes, "that I should a thousand times prefer to stay at home in my native country, where it would be a pleasure to me to serve on so illustrious a Board, and to contribute my own small share to the public good; at the same time to watch opportunities for improving my condition, and attend to the little property I have acquired, and thus live at home and have pleasant times, which, as long as my health and means with God's help continue, nothing would disturb—than to travel abroad, exposing myself, at my own by no means inconsiderable expense, to danger and vexation, especially in these unquiet times, and undergoing severe brain work and other hard labour with the probability of meeting in the end with more unfavourable than favourable judgments. But notwithstanding all this, I am influenced interiorly by the desire and longing to produce during my lifetime something real, which may be of use in the general scientific world and also to posterity, and in this way to be useful to and even to please my native country; and, if my wishes are realised, to obtain honour for it. . . . It is my own chief desire to bring this work to a close,

<sup>1</sup> The letter is printed in full in Dr R. L. Tafel's *Documents*, vol. i. pp. 458 and 459.

and to return to my country, to my office, and to my property, where I shall, in tranquillity and ease, continue my larger work, the *Regnum Minerale*, and thus be of actual use to the public at large in those matters which properly belong to the Royal Board."

Swedenborg started on his new journey in July 1743; his itinerary, however, does not extend beyond the 20th August, and contains little of special interest. He met many persons of note, and at Hamburg was presented to Prince Augustus and Prince Adolphus Frederic, the recently elected Crown Prince of Sweden. The latter was pleased to look at the MS. of Swedenborg's new book, and reviews of his former one. At the various places our author visited, he inspected the churches, fortifications, water works, public buildings, etc., as was his wont.

The new work, the *Regnum Animale*—at least Parts I. and II. of it—was published at the Hague in 1744.<sup>1</sup> We must reserve more particular notice of it, and of the other two works mentioned above, for the next chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### LATER PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS

SWEDENBORG'S anatomical studies began in early life. In 1719 he submitted a dissertation in Swedish on "*The anatomy of our most subtle nature, showing that our moving and living force consists of tremulations*" to the Royal Medical College. In the preparation of this treatise (the manuscript of which is still preserved in the Cathedral library of Linköping), he says: "I made myself thoroughly

<sup>1</sup> A third part was published in London in 1745; and an immense amount of matter was prepared for further portions, but left unpublished.

acquainted with the anatomy of the nerves and membranes"; and he claims to have "proved the harmony which exists between it and the interesting geometry of tremulations."<sup>1</sup> He returned to his studies of the structure of the human body again and again, and between the years 1734 and 1744 accumulated an immense amount of material for his philosophical treatises.

His object, as I have said, was to search into the causes of things,—to discover, if possible, where the living force resides that regulates the economy of the animal kingdom; for the animal kingdom of Swedenborg was the kingdom presided over by the human soul, that wonderful organism that responds to every command and suggestion of the indwelling spirit. Where this living essence resides, and what is its nature, were the objects of his ardent quest.

"I am strongly persuaded," he says, "that the essence and nature of the soul, its influx into the body, and the reciprocal action of the body, can never come to demonstration unless with these doctrines [he is referring to some suggestion of Locke's] is combined a knowledge of Anatomy, Pathology, and Psychology, yea even of Physics, and especially of the Auras of the World; and that unless our labours mount from experience, we shall in every new age have to build new systems, which in their turn will tumble to the ground, without the possibility of being rebuilt.

"This, and no other, is the reason that, with diligent study and intense application, I have investigated the anatomy of the body in all its parts. In doing this, I may perhaps have gone beyond the ordinary limits of inquiry, so that but few of my readers may be able distinctly to

understand me. Thus far however I have felt bound to venture, for I have resolved, cost what it may, to trace out the nature of the human soul."<sup>1</sup>

A word as to Swedenborg's philosophic method. Dr J. J. Garth Wilkinson in his introduction to the *Economy* calls Swedenborg the "Synthesis of Aristotle and Bacon." "In him," he says, "are realised the ascending method of Bacon and the descending one of Aristotle, and being connected at either end, they form a legitimate and widening spiral, revolving from the senses to the mind and from the mind to the senses." In a paper read before the Swedish Academy of Sciences, on 14th December 1740, Swedenborg explains and defends his method. He writes:

"There are two ways by which to trace out those things in nature which lie either open before us, or are hidden from our eyes—viz. the *a priori* which is also called the synthetical method, and the *a posteriori*, or the analytical method. Both are necessary in reflecting upon and tracing out one and the same thing: for in order to do so there is required both light *a priori*, and experience *a posteriori*. Now, while the learned among the ancients followed the former light as remotely and profoundly as they possibly could, those at a later period were induced not to accept anything as witness, unless it was confirmed by experience. Hence also some of the learned at the present day seem to have agreed to let thought rest, and to make experiments which would appeal to the senses; yet they did so with the hope and intent that some day experience would be connected with theory: for experience deprived of an insight into the nature of things is knowledge without learning, and

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Benzeliuss, *Documents*, vol. i. p. 310.

<sup>1</sup> *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, Part II. Nos. 213, 214.



a foundation without a building to rest upon it. The observations of the outward senses merely furnish *data* and give information about things which the understanding ought to investigate, and concerning which it ought to form its judgments; such also is the distinctive quality of a rational being whose superiority over brute animals consists in being able to exercise its understanding in matters acquired by experience.

"For the purpose of reaching this noble end, the learned scientific men of these later times have collected and accumulated such an abundant and invaluable treasure of experiments and facts, that we seem likely to be able soon to advance a step beyond, and to trace out the secret properties of nature *ex posteriori*, or by the analytical method, and thus to meet our learned forefathers who reached the same goal *a priori*, and with their help to climb up a higher Parnassus than they were able to do in their times."<sup>1</sup>

Swedenborg's method "evidently is the inductive and synthetic method combined. Commencing by observation, his mind seized upon certain high philosophical axioms; and from them reasoned downwards to the nature and uses of particular objects. Perhaps it is the only attempt the world has seen (with the exception of the unsuccessful efforts of Comte) at rising upwards to purely philosophical ideas from positive and concrete facts."<sup>2</sup>

"Swedenborg's mind," says White, "was essentially constructive; whenever it was plunged in a solution of facts crystallisation at once ensued; by nature he was an architect and no brickmaker. His commentaries on the facts of the anatomists mani-

fest in every way the creative spirit which transforms the inorganic to the organic."<sup>1</sup>

By such means, then, our author entered upon his momentous quest. He was conscious that he would have few to follow him, as appears from the words of Seneca which he prefixed as a motto to the *Economy*. Being interpreted, they run: "He is born to serve but few, who thinks of the people of his own age. Many thousands of years, many generations of men are yet to come: look to these, though for some cause silence has been imposed on all of your own day; there will come those who may judge without offence and without favour."

Swedenborg was not indifferent to the appreciation of his contemporaries, but few have allowed the praise of men to influence them so little. "Of what consequence," he asks, "is it to me that I should persuade anyone to embrace my opinions? Let his own reason persuade him. I do not undertake this work for the sake of honour or emolument,—both of which I shun rather than seek, because they disquiet the mind, and because I am content with my lot,—but for the sake of truth, which alone is immortal."<sup>2</sup>

*The Economy of the Animal Kingdom* consisted of two parts, the first of which was published in 1740, and the second in the following year. Part I. deals with the composition and circulation of the blood, and with foetal life. It contains also a division setting forth the elements of a system of "Rational Psychology," in which we have an exposition of the doctrine of series and degrees, which, in a modified form, plays such an important part in Swedenborg's later spiritual phil-

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. pp. 568, 569.

<sup>2</sup> *Historical and Critical View of Speculative Philosophy of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, by J. D. Morell, vol. i. p. 320.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> *The Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, Part II. No. 218.

osophy. Part II. treats, in three chapters, of (1) the motion of the brain, (2) its cortical substance, and (3) the human soul. Dr Spurgin, a former president of the Royal College of Physicians, declared the last chapter to be "a production unparalleled for excellence in the whole compass of human philosophy"; and S. T. Coleridge spoke in terms of the highest praise of some parts of the work. It was undoubtedly a profound and suggestive treatise, but it failed in its ultimate aim. Its author looked to find the soul in the inmost recesses and subtlest essences of the body; but, not being there, it was not to be found, and he had to confess his failure.

"Nothing," he wrote, "is farther removed from the human understanding than what at the same time is really present to it; and that nothing is more present to it than what is universal, prior, and superior; since this enters into every particular, and into everything posterior and inferior. What is more omnipresent than the Deity,—in Him we live and move and have our being,—and yet what is more remote from the sphere of the understanding?" So with the human soul; its presence in the body is manifest: but it cannot be found by searching in matter, any more than God can.

Our ardent philosopher was not dismayed, nevertheless. He was dissatisfied with his present work, but he would search yet more deeply. He continued to study and write in preparation for a still more important work, the original plan of which embraced seventeen parts, dealing, more or less, with the anatomy of the whole body, and putting forth many philosophical suggestions. He published two parts at the Hague in 1744, and a third in London the following year. The work was never completed for reasons that will

presently appear, though a great mass of valuable manuscript was prepared for further parts, some of which have been translated and published in England in recent years.

In the prologue he says: "Not very long since I published *The Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, . . . and before traversing the whole field in detail, I made a rapid passage to the soul and put forth an essay respecting it. But on considering the matter more deeply, I found that I had directed my course thither both too hastily and too fast,—after having explored the blood only and its peculiar organs. I took the step impelled by an ardent desire for knowledge." The *Animal Kingdom*, then, was to remedy the defects and supply the deficiencies of the *Economy*. What was Swedenborg's object in writing these works? He was anything but a barren speculator, as we have seen,—he aimed at practical ends in all his labours. What, then, did he desire to accomplish by these high philosophical studies? Secure in his own faith in God and spiritual things, he was appalled at the prevalent materialism of his time. There were many then, as now, who tried to persuade themselves that God was an abstraction, and the soul a theological assumption. The existence of God he never allowed himself to question, but in regard to the soul, he hoped to demonstrate that the brain, instead of secreting thought as the liver secretes bile, was the temple of the indwelling spirit; which, however, he half believed was in some way a sublimated form of matter.

To those who deprecated such peering into spiritual mysteries, who held that "all those things which transcend our present state are matters for faith and not for intellect," he replied: "I grant this; nor would I persuade anyone who comprehends these high truths by

faith, to attempt to comprehend them by his intellect: let him abstain from my books. . . . But these pages of mine are written with a view to those only who never believe anything but what they can receive with the intellect; consequently who boldly invalidate and are fain to deny the existence of all super-eminent things, sublimer than themselves,—as the soul itself, and what follows therefrom: its life, immortality, heaven, etc. . . . For these persons only I am anxious; and, as I said before, for them indite, and to them I dedicate my work. For when I shall have demonstrated truths themselves by the analytic method, I hope that those debasing shadows, or material clouds, which darken the sacred temple of the mind will be dispersed, and that thus at last, under the favour of God, who is the Sun of Wisdom, an access will be opened and a way laid down to faith.”

Swedenborg’s scientific and philosophical works are said to have had a large sale, and he placed them freely at the service of those who “possess understanding, and are interested in such subjects”;<sup>1</sup> but they do not seem to have exercised any striking influence on the thought of his time. Kant was surprised to find himself largely in agreement with Swedenborg, and expressed annoyance at the discovery. His jealousy caused him to issue a pamphlet in 1766, throwing ridicule upon Swedenborg’s claims to spiritual intercourse, in which he says:

“The system of Swedenborg is unfortunately very similar to my own philosophy. It is not impossible that my rational views may be considered absurd by reason of that affinity. As to the offensive com-

parison, I declare, we must either suppose greater intelligence and truth at the basis of Swedenborg’s writings than first impressions excite, or that it is a mere accident when he coincides with my system,—a *lusus naturæ*. Such a wonderful agreement exists between his doctrines and the deepest results of reason, that there is no other alternative whereby the correspondence can be explained.”

Though there is evidence that some of Swedenborg’s contemporaries assimilated and worked upon his ideas,<sup>1</sup> we meet with no frank acknowledgment of his services to philosophy until our own time. To all appearance these great and laborious works were, as White remarks, “forgotten as soon as published.”

With another short extract we must take leave of the *Animal Kingdom*. The interest of this passage is its anticipation of the doctrine of correspondences, which, as we shall see, became one of the foundation principles of the author’s theological system.

“In our Doctrine of Representations and Correspondences,” he says, “we shall treat of both these symbolical and typical representations, and of the astonishing things which occur, I will not say in the living body only, but throughout nature, and which correspond so entirely to supreme and spiritual things that one would swear *that the physical world is purely symbolical of the spiritual world*,—insomuch that if we choose to express any natural truth in physical and definite vocal terms, and to convert them into the corresponding spiritual terms, we shall by this means elicit a spiritual truth in place of the physical truth; although no mortal could have predicted that anything of the kind could possibly arise by bare literal

<sup>1</sup> See letter to an unknown “Councillor of Chancery,” dated 16th September 1745 (*Documents*, vol. i. p. 369).

<sup>1</sup> See chap. xiii. *Swedenborg’s Science*.



transposition ; inasmuch as the one precept, considered separately from the other, appears to have absolutely no relation to it."<sup>1</sup>

The *Animal Kingdom*, as I have said, was never completed ; but in 1745 Swedenborg published another most remarkable book, entitled *The Worship and Love of God*. It is a little difficult to understand the meaning and intention of this work ; but the wisdom and beauty embodied in it are unmistakable. Dr Wilkinson regards it as "an expectant day-dream of his theology, abundant in charming details, and crowded with significance," "an allegory of a six days' work" ; the Rev. T. M. Gorman, who edited the most recent English edition,<sup>2</sup> insists that it is to be accepted literally as an account of the method and order of creation. Few, I think, will be found to agree with the latter, as there is evidence of a playful fancy about the book. Swedenborg himself said that it was written "under the leadership of the understanding, and according to the thread of reason," and, in reply to a querist who asked him how the book was to be regarded, stated that

"It was certainly founded on truth, but somewhat of egotism had introduced itself into it, as he had made a playful use in it of the Latin language, on account of his having been ridiculed for the simplicity of his Latin style in later years. For this reason he did not regard it as *equal* to his other works."<sup>3</sup> It does not properly belong to the category either of his scientific or his theological works, but holds a distinct place of its own.

A summary of its contents can give no idea of the book itself ; indeed, it might lead the reader to

think it a worthless production. Nevertheless, I risk this possible injustice to the author ; guarding against it by adding such selections as will convey some idea of its literary charm and extraordinary depth of wisdom. Most readers of the book would be struck by the mixture of childish, or perhaps I should say childlike, simplicity, and profound penetration.

It essays to give an account of creation, on evolutionary lines ; first describing the birth of the planets from the sun by a process that anticipated the later nebular theory of Laplace and Kant.<sup>1</sup> Our own earth, when it had at length broken free from the nebulous ring which surrounded the sun, and from which it had its origin, was gradually prepared for the advent of life, the germs of which existed as "small eggs collected at its surface, or small seeds of its future triple kingdom—viz. the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal. These seeds or beginnings lay as yet unseparated in their rudiments, one folded up in another, namely, the vegetable kingdom in the mineral kingdom, which was to be the matrix ; and in the vegetable kingdom, which was to serve as a nurse or nourisher, the animal kingdom ; for each afterwards was to come forth distinctly from their coverings. Thus the present contained the past, and what was to come lay concealed in each, for one thing involved another in a continual series ; by which means this earth, from its continued auspices, was perpetually in a kind of birth."<sup>2</sup>

The earth, we are told, gradually receded from the sun, its annual

<sup>1</sup> Swedenborg's claim to be considered the originator of the nebular hypothesis is discussed in chapter xiii.

<sup>2</sup> P. 18. (All references are to the English edition of 1885, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co.)

<sup>1</sup> Part I. Note, p. 451.

<sup>2</sup> Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1885.

<sup>3</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 710

and diurnal rotations occupying an increasing length of time as it removed farther and farther from the parent orb. At the time when life first appeared, the year was no longer than our present month, and the day not more than two hours in duration. The effect of this rapid rotation was to equalise the climate, the seasons merging into one another so as to form a perpetual spring. These halcyon days are described in a passage which may serve as an example of the poetic style of the book.

"The proximate atmosphere itself, or air, breathed the most grateful temperature in consequence of receiving so copious a light and alternate heat, and at the same time, being warmed by fruitful dews exhaled from the bosom of the earth; for as yet there was no furious wind, no Boreas to disturb the air with his stormy whirlwind; nor as yet did the smallest cloud intercept the splendour of the sun and of the stars; but the face of everything was serene, and zephyrs only, with their gentle fannings, appeased the murmurs of the winds."<sup>1</sup>

The earliest forms of vegetable life were herbs and lowly flowers, which clothed the surface of the earth with beauty; after these, shrubs and plants; and finally, trees. From the vegetable world proceeded the primal forms of animal life, the earliest being insects; from the shrubs were produced eggs which were nourished among their branches, and eventually hatched into birds; while the quadrupeds "were in like manner produced from viviparous forests," the branching horns of many of them indicating their arboreal origin! Lastly came man, the product of the Tree of Life, "which bore a small egg, the most precious of all others, in which, as in a jewel, nature concealed herself

<sup>1</sup> P. 22.

with her highest powers and stores, to become the initiations of the most consummate body."

The first man, according to this strange fancy, did not appear on the earth of full stature, but as a helpless infant. From his birth he was attended by angelic ministrants, who instructed him in the order of his life, and in celestial wisdom. A great part of the first division of the book is occupied with a description of this heavenly education; while Part II. describes the birth of Eve and the marriage of the first-born.

Have I disgusted the reader with such childish speculations? I trust not, for he will lose much if he allows the prejudice they may arouse to debar him from a perusal of the book. Should he overcome his repugnance and proceed to read, he will soon be lost in amazement at the brilliancy and profundity of the thoughts that clothe this feeble narrative. Before introducing him to some of these, I must quote one more short passage of great beauty, describing the attitude of nature on the eve of the first human birthday.

"It was midnight, and the constellations of heaven, as if also about to applaud, did now shine not only with brightness, but also glittered with a kind of flaming beam; they were also ardent to prevent their setting, but the day-dawn, hastening to its rising, dimmed their lustre, and instantly opened the gates of day for the sun."<sup>1</sup>

Written at the transitional period of Swedenborg's life, *The Worship and Love of God* gathers up many of the ideas found in the earlier works, and reaches forward to the high truths which he was henceforth to expound. Geometry is still to him the most fascinating of sciences, and in a suggestive note he returns to his "doctrine of forms," classifying

<sup>1</sup> P. 59.

geometric forms in an ascending series from angular forms, "the form proper to earthly substances," through circular, spherical and spiral, to the vortical, the geometry of the heavens.<sup>1</sup> From the doctrine of forms he ascends to that of order and degrees, and lays the foundation for one of the main principles of his later spiritual philosophy. The doctrine of correspondences, which we saw was foreshadowed in the *Animal Kingdom*, is here further developed and more clearly stated. We read :

"Such is the established correspondence, that by natural and moral truths, by means of the transpositions only of the expressions that signify natural things, we are introduced into spiritual truths, and *vice versa*, and thus, as it were, from one Paradise into another. For the sake of illustration, let one or two examples suffice, as first, *Light reveals the quality of its object, but the quality of the object appears according to the state of the light, wherefore the object is not always such as it appears.* . . . Now if instead of light we take intelligence, the quality of the object of which is the truth of a thing ; since intelligence is universally allowed to be spiritual light, this conclusion follows : *Intelligence discovers the truth of a thing, but the truth of a thing appears according to the state of the intelligence ; wherefore that is not always true which is supposed to be true,*" etc.<sup>2</sup>

Again :

"Nothing in any case exists in nature which does not in a type resemble its origin, or soul ; and as this origin is from heaven (for all uses, as was said, are ends designed by heaven), therefore things natural and things celestial must of necessity agree with each other, according to the order first induced, or the most perfect order ; and this in such a

manner, that it is allowable to take a view of one from the other ; for if we unfold natural things, and in their place transcribe celestial or spiritual things, congruous things result."<sup>1</sup>

Those familiar with Swedenborg's remarkable work on *The Divine Love and Wisdom*, published eighteen years later, will recognise the germs of many of the profound ideas it embodies in the work before us. An exhaustive comparison is out of the question, but I may point out some of the more striking of these anticipations.

That all life is spiritual, that spirit is substance, and that, as the origin of all things, God Himself is the only true and real substance, is clearly taught in a note on page 76 :

"The soul is so real a substance, that all the substances of the body, which enjoy active life, are from it, and are called substances, but compounded ones ; for every compound is only an aggregate of its simple substances ; nor is anything truly a substance but the Supreme, which is therefore called a simple substance."

Another great principle, that no substance is without form is stated in so many words in a note on page 81. (Most of these great philosophical principles are discussed in notes, which notes might justly be regarded as the most valuable part of the book.)

"Whether we speak of forms or substances, it amounts to the same thing, since no substance produced from God is given without a form, whence it derives its faculties of acting, and its qualities."

That creation is an emanation from God as the essential substance, and not a making of something out of nothing is strongly insisted upon in both works. In the earlier one we read :

<sup>1</sup> Note, pp. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Note, p. 107.

<sup>1</sup> Note, p. 141.



"From what has no being it is impossible for anything to exist, and out of nothing, nothing can be made." <sup>1</sup>

A leading proposition in *The Divine Love and Wisdom* is that "the love or will is the very life of man." In *The Worship and Love of God*, we read: "Without love there is no life, and the life is of such a quality as is the love." <sup>2</sup>

The essential connection between goodness and truth, and the influence of the will upon perception and belief, are demonstrated in both works. "All truths," we read in *The Worship and Love*, "concentrate in goodness, consequently expand themselves, as it were, into circumferences from goodness, as from a centre." <sup>3</sup> Again: "Our loves . . . hold the reins, and excite and govern our minds; by them we are drawn, and then we follow." <sup>4</sup>

In both books, too, it is taught that all life and wisdom are derived, and that the way to true philosophy is to keep the mind open to influences from within and above.

"There are only two ways of access to thy mind, viz., from above, and from beneath; the way from above is through the soul and its temple; this way is sacred. . . . This way is open only to the Lord of light, and to His love; but the latter, or inferior way, is the only one through which he (the prince of this world) can creep, and exert his influences." <sup>5</sup>

"Our minds are such as to be capable of turning two ways, as upon hinges, viz., inwards and outwards, or upwards and downwards; for there are, as it were, two ways or places of reception, of two guests." <sup>6</sup>

Materialists cannot see spiritual

truth because they persistently look downwards and outwards instead of upwards and inwards. "They suffer themselves to be convinced by nothing, but by the testimony of the external senses; and what is wonderful, they reject from their belief the clearest agencies and effects, unless they see them also in a substance; wherefore when they look into truth from this connection and order, the chain snaps asunder, at its first link, and thus their view remains fixed in mere earthly objects, or in matters which are born from the ultimate form." <sup>1</sup>

Turning again to the narrative part of this book, Adam is instructed in the nature of true wisdom by heavenly intelligences; and the folly of attempting to solve divine mysteries by "natural" reason is represented to him in a striking allegory. The leader of the celestial "wisdoms" teaches him that "supreme things, or things superior in order, flow in into inferior things, and these into ultimate things, but not *vice versâ*; hence inferior things derive their powers and perfections, or thence flow all the qualities and abilities of inferior things. When this order is established, then there is nothing so complicated and abstruse which is not explained and unfolded, for it is the light itself which sees, and the living force which acts. . . . But it is altogether otherwise if this order be inverted, that is, if liberty be given to nature to break in, without leave, into the higher and sacred recesses of life." <sup>2</sup>

*The Worship and Love of God* is full of profound and brilliant thoughts, but we can only cull one or two more of aphoristic character.

"We really here live and walk as little universes, and carry both heaven and the world, consequently

<sup>1</sup> P. 127.

<sup>2</sup> P. 155.

<sup>3</sup> P. 96.

<sup>4</sup> P. 123.

<sup>5</sup> P. 167.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 110 and 111.

<sup>1</sup> P. 231.

<sup>2</sup> P. 144.

the kingdom of God, in ourselves." <sup>1</sup>

"Love, when it is ardent, desires nothing more vehemently, or seeks more intently, than such a connection of its nature—viz. that it may be another's not its own, and conceiving that only to be its own which is reflected from another into itself." <sup>2</sup>

"What is life? Is it not to understand what is true, and to relish what is good?" <sup>3</sup>

"Life has ordained nature to be a consort with itself, and to exercise power accordingly." <sup>4</sup>

"Let us not, then, I pray, immerse our rational views in empty sophisms, or rather in mere shades, . . . by asking, whether our minds and souls are material, or whether they are extended, so as to fill spaces, and whether their activities are to be measured by times or the velocities of times, and the like; for matter is only an expression, the attributes and predicates of which ought to be defined absolutely to all sense and apprehension, before it can be demonstrated according to what understanding those forms and their activities are to be perceived." <sup>5</sup>

The reader will be able to form some opinion from these extracts of the high philosophy of this little book. In point of theology it is more or less orthodox—the doctrine of a personal Trinity seems to be accepted, and even that of substitution, which afterwards its author so strongly repudiated. Swedenborg had as yet no clear ideas of the mission he was to fulfil as a religious reformer; his aim in this and his other philosophical works seems to have been to establish the Divine origin of creation and the reality of spiritual things. That he was alive

to the necessity of reform in the Church, however, appears from the following allegorical description of her condition at the conclusion of Part I. The "Heavenly Wisdom" declares to Adam that the goal of life is that "*full opportunity may be given of enjoying our Love (i.e. God), and this for ever,*" and continues: "But in what manner mortals, while they tend towards this goal itself, direct their course through devious and dark roads, sometimes backwards and sometimes forwards, I have seen with mine own eyes: . . . for they everywhere institute and celebrate sacred sports in honour of the Supreme, or the Deity, but with infinite variety. For the most part they set up a kind of goal elevated into the form of a pyramid or obelisk; but the plain itself, where the races, whether in chariots, or on horses, or on foot, are to be performed, they cut into several paths. Some form these paths into winding labyrinths, and when the sound of the trumpet is given by the crier, the crowd, while they set out for the goal, and direct their course through those paths, for the most part lose their way, and when they think that they are going in a right line, and have even reached the goal, they apperceive that they have wandered entirely from that point. Some also with their eyes blinded, rushed on, chained together in a long row, over whom were set leaders, bearing in their hands immense maps and charts, in which the wanderings of the paths were marked by mile-posts and indices; a troop of lictors followed the crowd, to compel those who had escaped from the ranks, by whips and scourges, to return, to the first appointed order. There were some also, who, having measured all the distances of the course, in their prospect seemed to measure even the goal; but then first appeared in the interval a deep whirlpool

<sup>1</sup> P. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 194-195.

<sup>3</sup> P. 179.

<sup>4</sup> P. 142.

<sup>5</sup> Note, pp. 94-95.

broken up from the jaws of the mountains, from the other bank of which the column itself of the goal, with its decorations and rewards, was beheld, and thus at length they apperceived that they had to measure back the whole of their way, in order that they might return into the right path, which, by reason of its narrowness, had not been seen, but passed by.”<sup>1</sup>

“If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,” said Jesus; this is the narrow path which the churches in Swedenborg’s day refused to follow, trusting to climb up some other way to the realms of bliss. It was Swedenborg’s mission to declare once more: “This is the way, walk ye in it!”<sup>2</sup>

## CHAPTER VI

### BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

*The Worship and Love of God* was published, as we have said, in 1745; in 1749 appeared the first volume of *Arcana Cælestia*. A more complete contrast between the character of the two works could scarcely be imagined. The poetic diction of the former has been discarded for a level unrheterical prose; philosophical speculation has given place to confident assertion in regard to spiritual matters, though without a trace of egotism; while theological orthodoxy is superseded by the widely different system of doctrine usually associated with the author’s name. The same subject—the creation, and the early history of the human race—is dealt with in both books, but the treatment is totally different. In the earlier work the story of the creation is accepted as literal history, though interpreted somewhat freely in accordance with the speculative

ideas of the author; in the new book it is regarded as a Divine allegory, the only consistent interpretation of which is shown to be spiritual. Whence has come this remarkable change? The explanation is given by Swedenborg in the concluding paragraph of the introduction to the *Arcana Cælestia*. After asserting that the Sacred Scriptures contain a spiritual sense, he proceeds:

“That this is really the case, in respect to the Word, it is impossible for any mortal to know, however, except from the Lord. Wherefore it is expedient here to premise, that, of the Lord’s divine mercy, it has been granted me, now for several years, to be constantly and uninterruptedly in company with spirits and angels, hearing them converse with each other, and conversing with them. Hence it has been permitted me to hear and see things in another life which are astonishing, and which have never before come to the knowledge of any man, nor entered into his imagination. I have thus been instructed concerning different kinds of spirits, and the state of souls after death,—concerning hell, or the lamentable state of the unfaithful,—concerning heaven, or the most happy state of the faithful,—and particularly concerning the doctrine of faith which is acknowledged throughout all heaven: on which subjects, by the divine mercy of the Lord, more will be said in the following pages.”

By many persons this extraordinary claim is regarded as an indication of mental aberration; but those who have an intimate acquaintance with the author’s subsequent writings and are therefore best fitted to judge, have no hesitation in accepting it fully. In no other way can they account for the wonderful spiritual insight which these works display. I do not propose to discuss the validity of the claim here, but invite the reader’s

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 203 and 204.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xxx. 21.



attention to the most remarkable psychological revelation ever given to men,—the record, in Swedenborg's own words, of the gradual opening of his spiritual sight. Granting the possibility of such an intromission into the world of spirit, we should scarcely expect it to occur suddenly, without preparation, and without premonitory signs. If we accept Swedenborg's own statements, such preparation and such signs were not wanting. He tells us, indeed, that he had been prepared from his earliest youth for the holy office to which God had called him; but it was not until 1743 that he began to have direct intimations of the great change that was about to come over him. When in the early part of that year he made application to the Board of Mines for leave of absence to go abroad and publish his *Regnum Animale*, it is evident that he had no thought of such a revolutionary change in the order of his life.<sup>1</sup>

In conversation with Carl Robsahm many years later, he remarked: "I, for my own part, had never expected to come into that spiritual state, in which I am now; but the Lord selected me for this work, and for revealing the spiritual meaning of the Sacred Scriptures, which He had promised in the prophets and in the book of Revelation. My purpose previously had been to explore nature, chemistry, and the sciences of mining and anatomy."<sup>2</sup>

In a letter to the Rev. Thomas Hartley, written towards the close of his life, Swedenborg assigns the year 1743 as the date of the opening of his spiritual sight. This was probably the earliest direct intimation he received of his call; but it was in April 1745, as he tells us in several places, that he was fully admitted to intercourse with angels and spirits,

speaking with them as man with man. There is no doubt that the process was a gradual one; in *Heaven and Hell*, No. 130, we read: "I was elevated into heaven interiorly by degrees, and in proportion as I was elevated, my understanding was elevated, so that I was at length enabled to perceive things which at first I did not perceive, and, finally, such things as it had been impossible for me to comprehend"; and in the *Spiritual Diary*, No. 2951, we are told of remarkable dreams and visions, extraordinary lights seen and voices heard, and, finally, direct speech with "a certain spirit." Again, in the *Adversaria*, No. 183, he says: "At first I had dreams during a number of years, when I learned something of their real signification."

Swedenborg kept a private diary of his experiences during a part of this time, the very existence of which was unknown until 1858, when the MS. was acquired by the Royal Library, Stockholm. It had been in the possession of Professor Scheringsson, of Westerås, who died in 1849 in his ninetieth year, and had lain for nearly ten years more unnoticed among his papers. The Royal Librarian, Mr G. E. Klemming, published the diary in 1859, under the title of *Swedenborg's Dreams, 1744, with some other Memoranda from his Hand*; and caused much excitement thereby among the disciples of the seer. By some its authenticity was questioned, others doubted the wisdom and justice of publishing so private a record; but the genuineness of the document is now fairly established, and its value as a unique psychological study is held to justify the revelation of such intimate self-confidences, notwithstanding the opportunity some of the entries have given for the enemy to blaspheme. A translation of this diary, with explanatory notes, will be found in

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 35.

Dr R. L. Tafel's *Documents*, pp. 134 to 219.

Let us reverently examine this solemn record, recognising the fact that "we are penetrating the inner secrets of a man's life deeper and more completely, perhaps, than has been done in the case of any other man that ever lived." Though the diary only covers the short period from 24th March 1744 to 27th October of the same year, embracing however a brief record of some earlier dreams, we have a most complete picture of a soul laid bare. No priest ever heard a more sincere confession, or pronounced pardon to a more humble penitent. We have seen how upright and blameless before the world this man's life had been; yet he cast himself before his Lord as the vilest and most unworthy of mortals. If he had not been guilty of flagrant sin, he knew that the love of evil still lurked within him, as within us all, ready to be stirred into act by temptation; and wayward thoughts prompted to lust, to pride, to self-confidence. The deepest evils are not those that appear outwardly, as insidious and fatal diseases often lurk in an apparently healthy body. Only by severe temptations can interior evils be extirpated, and such temptations Swedenborg underwent.

"I found," he writes (April 7 × 8<sup>1</sup>), "that I was more unworthy than others and the greatest sinner, for this reason, that our Lord has granted me to penetrate by thought into certain things more deeply than many others; and the very source of sin lies in the thoughts I am

<sup>1</sup>The dates are thus given in the *Diary*. His record is of the night-time, during which apparently most of these experiences came to him: in the day-time he was as other men. "All the while," he says, "I was in society constantly as before, and no one could observe the least change in me" (*Documents*, vol. ii. p. 166).

carrying out; so that my sins have on that account a deeper foundation than those of many others; and in this I found my unworthiness and my sins greater than those of other men."

Intellectual pride seems to have been one of his besetting faults. "I saw a bookshop," he writes under the same date, "and immediately the thought struck me that my work would have more effect than that of others; yet I checked myself at once; for one serves another, and our Lord has more than a thousand ways by which to prepare a man, so that each and every book must be left to its own merits, as a means near or remote, according to the rational condition of every man. Still arrogance at once crops up: may God control it, for the power is in His hands!" On another occasion he had been attending a lecture at the Royal College of Surgeons, London, "when I was rash enough," he says, "to think that I should be mentioned as one of those who understood anatomy best; I was glad, however, that this was not done."

On April 8 × 9 we read: "I entreated Christ's mercy for cherishing so much pride and arrogance, by which I flatter myself." He confesses (April 13 × 14) that "I am inclined to boast of my work." Some months later (October 6 × 7) he writes: "Afterwards I lighted upon these thoughts, and received this instruction, viz., that all love for whatever object, as, for instance, for the work upon which I am now engaged—whenever such an object is loved (for its own sake), and not as a medium for the only love, which is to God and Jesus Christ, is a meretricious love."

He acknowledges on several occasions that he is inclined to resist God's will and choose his own course. "There was something in me (April

10 x 11) that prevented my submitting myself to God's grace as I ought to have done, thus suffering Him to do with me according to His good pleasure." On April 15 x 16 he dreamt that he was in the company of two women who lay beside him on the greensward. "I kissed the hands of both, and did not know which of the two I should love." "The two women," he tells us later on, "signified that I would rather be in philosophical than in spiritual studies."<sup>1</sup>

We can guess something of the struggle that was going on in his mind, and can understand his suddenly breaking off his work upon the *Regnum Animale*. He had, by that time, given up his own will and submitted to what he believed to be the Divine direction.

Intellectual pride was not the only form of temptation that came to him. "The Evil One," he says, "had power given him to disturb my inmost mind by various thoughts," and thus all the lurking passions of human nature were called up, until he felt that he was "unclean from head to foot," "in spiritual things, a stinking corpse." On April 10 x 11 he writes, "I am still weary in my body and mind; for I know nothing except my own unworthiness, and am in pain on account of being such a wretched creature. I see by this knowledge that I am unworthy of the grace I have received." In the entry for the night following, we read: "I perceived in myself . . . that in every particular thought, and even in that which we consider pure, an infinite

quantity of sin and impurity is contained, and likewise in every desire which enters from the body into the thoughts; these spring from great roots. Although, therefore, a thought may appear pure, it, nevertheless, is a fact that a person may think in a certain way from timidity, hypocrisy, and many other causes, as may also be traced out by an exploration of the thoughts; so that on this account man is so much the more unable to free himself from sin, and there is not a single thought which is not very much alloyed with uncleanness and impurity. . . . I have, indeed, observed that our whole will into which we are born, and which is ruled by the body and introduces thought, is opposed to the Spirit . . . and hence it is that we are dead to everything good, but to everything evil we are inclined from ourselves."

On May 19 x 20 he writes: "I had many pernicious thoughts, from which I perceived that my body is in a continual state of rebellion. . . . I could not control myself so entirely as not to have carnal desires; yet without any intention of causing their ultimatum." "Daily," he says again (August 4 x 5), "I sin against my God in the thoughts which cling to me; and from which no man, but God alone, can deliver me."

Even his very virtues were a source of temptation. "While I was thinking," he writes, "as is often the case, suppose someone should consider me a saint, and on that account think highly of me; nay, suppose, as is done by some simple-minded people, he should not only revere but also adore me as one whom he considers a holy man or a saint; in this case I found that in the zeal in which I was, I was willing to inflict upon him the greatest possible pain, rather than that sin should be laid upon him. I saw also that I must

<sup>1</sup> His frequent visions of women have been misinterpreted by uncharitable critics. He explains himself that "All objects of the sciences, viz., all truths, were represented under the form of women or virgins"; in this instance, he was apparently somewhat equally attracted by philosophy and theology, and reluctant to give up this old love of the former.



entreat the Lord with the most earnest prayers, not to have any share in so damnable a sin, which would then be laid to my charge."

Like St Paul, he experienced the conflict which arises between the flesh and the spirit under stress of severe temptation; and he believed that his temptations came from an outside source. He even felt at times that malign spirits had taken possession of him, and were endeavouring to force him to the commission of evil "which he would not"; but he never lost faith or courage, and prayed vehemently for deliverance from his tormentors. He realised, also, that his prayers were answered, and often rose from the depths of despondency to heights of conscious victory. After a period of "most severe temptation," so that he could scarcely control the ungodly thoughts that arose in his mind, he wrote:

"Yet I can affirm, that I never was of better courage than to-day, and that I was not in the least faint-hearted and pained as on previous days, although the temptation was most severe. The reason is, that our Lord has given me this strong faith and confidence, that He helps me for the sake of Jesus Christ and according to His own promise; so that I then experienced what effect such faith has."

Feeling himself to be under the hand of God, he submitted patiently to his trials and disciplined himself with the severity of a mediæval saint. "The whole day of the 9th [April]," he says, "I spent in prayer, in songs of praise, in reading God's Word, and fasting; except in the morning when I was otherwise occupied."

If he was often in a state of gloom and depression, he had his times of exaltation also. "I experienced so much of the Lord's grace," he wrote (April 7 x 8), "when I resolved to

keep my thoughts in a state of purity, as to feel an inmost joy. . . . I was not allowed to mention the large measure of grace which had fallen to my lot; for I perceived that on the one hand it could serve no other purpose than to set people thinking about me either favourably or unfavourably, according to their disposition towards me; and on the other hand, it would not be productive of any use, if the glorification of God's grace served to encourage my own self-love.

"The best comparison I could make of myself was with a peasant elevated to power as a prince or king, so that he could have whatever his heart desired; and yet there was something in him which desired to teach him that he himself knew nothing. By this comparison, however, it is seen that it is Thy hand (O God) which causes this great joy."

On the night of Easter Sunday, after distressing dreams and severe temptations, "I awoke and slept again many times; and all I dreamt was in answer to my thoughts; yet so, that in every thing there was such life and glory, that I can give no description of it; for it was all heavenly; clear to me at the time, but afterwards inexpressible. In short, I was in heaven, and heard a language, which no human tongue can utter with its inherent life, nor the glory and inmost delight resulting from it. . . . Both in mind and body I had a sensation of such indescribable delight, that had it been more intense, the body would have been, as it were, dissolved in pure bliss."

On the following day, he says: "My thoughts were more profound and beautiful than they had ever been before." At night he had strange experiences. Violent tremors shook him, and he was thrown out of bed upon his face. He heard a

sound like the concourse of many winds. "I wondered what all this meant, and then spoke, as if I were awake. I noticed, however, that these words were put into my mouth: 'O Thou Almighty Jesus Christ, who of Thy great mercy deignest to come to so great a sinner, make me worthy of this grace!' I lifted up my hands, and prayed, when a hand came and strongly pressed my hands; I then continued my prayer, and said: 'O Thou, who hast promised to receive all sinners, Thou canst not otherwise than keep Thy word!' I lay on His bosom, and looked at Him face to face. It was a countenance with a holy expression, and so that it cannot be described; it was also smiling, and I really believe that His countenance was such during His life upon earth. He addressed me and asked, if I had a certificate of health? I answered, 'O Lord, Thou knowest this better than I'; when He said, 'Do it then!'—This, as I perceived in my mind, signified, 'Love me really, or do as thou hast promised.' O God, impart to me grace for this! I perceived that I could not do this by my own strength. . . . About day-break, I fell asleep again, and then had continually in my thought, how Christ conjoins Himself to mankind; holy thoughts came, but they were of such a nature as to be unfathomable; for I cannot express with my pen the least part of those things which happened. I only know that I have had such thoughts."

On the night of April 9 × 10, he says, "I slept very tranquilly. At three or four o'clock I awoke and lay awake, but in a kind of vision. I could look up and be observant whenever I chose, so that I was not otherwise than awake, and yet in the spirit there was an inward gladness which diffused itself over the whole body. All seemed in a wonderful and transcendent manner to ap-

proach and conspire; to rise up as it were and nestle in infinitude as a centre, where Love itself was."

On the morning of the 11th April, he says: "I was in my usual state of internal gladness, which was, nevertheless, attended with a pang." On the night of April 14 × 15 "the Spirit came with its heavenly and almost ecstatic life in so high a degree, and permitted me, as it were, to rise higher and higher in it, that if I had ascended still higher, I should have been dissolved in this real life of joy."

The result of all these experiences was to bring him to a state of profound humility. Again and again he prays for this grace, or gives thanks for having attained something of it. Describing one of his temptations, he says: "This have I learned, that the only thing in this state—and I do not know any other—is, in all humility to thank God for His grace, and to pray for it, and to recognise our own unworthiness, and God's infinite grace." "Very often," he says again, "I burst into tears, not of sorrow, but of inmost joy at our Lord's deigning to be so gracious to so unworthy a sinner; for the sum of all I found to be this, that the only thing needful is to cast one's self in all humility on our Lord's grace, to recognise one's own unworthiness, and to thank God in humility for His grace."

To do God's will became the desire of his heart. "I have for my motto," he writes, "God's will be done; I am Thine and not mine; as therefore I have given myself from myself to the Lord, He may dispose of me after His own pleasure." Again: "I prayed to God that I might not be my own, but that God might please to let me be His." Describing a vision, in which he saw a profusion of gold, he says: "It denotes that the Lord, who disposes all things, gives me in spiritual and

worldly matters all that I need, whenever like a child I cast my care upon Him." In all his work, he recognises himself "simply as an instrument."

His consciousness of the Divine leading became stronger as time advanced. In the very last day's entry (October 26 × 27) we read: "May God lead me in the right way! Christ said that I must not undertake anything without Him." He looked for direct teaching when he should be duly prepared. "I saw also in a vision," he writes (October 12 × 13), "how some beautiful bread was presented to me on a plate.—This was a prediction that the Lord Himself will instruct me, as soon as I have attained that state in which I shall know nothing, and in which all my preconceived notions will be removed from me; which is the first state of learning: or, in other words, that I must first become a child, and that then I shall be able to be nurtured in knowledge, as is being the case with me now." "I discovered," he says, under the same date, that "I am in such a state that I know nothing on this subject" (*i.e.* on religion); and, on the previous day, he tells us: "I have no knowledge about religion, but have lost all." It was necessary that he should be emptied of all self-will and preconceived ideas, before he could become a fitting instrument for the work before him.

Thus end all his worldly ambitions, and learned studies; a fortnight later he has abandoned the work on which he was engaged and for which he had made such extensive plans and preparations.

These inward experiences were accompanied by extraordinary outward manifestations. His dreams were vivid and sometimes terrifying; at other times delightful and encouraging. Many of them had

evident meaning; about others he was doubtful. Again and again he dreamt of dogs, sometimes friendly, sometimes fierce and dangerous. Once he was entangled in the spokes of a wheel, again he was hanging over an abyss, or walking upon treacherous ice. He dreamt of palaces, churches, kings, men and women—both individuals and in great processions and armies—amazingly large and high windmills, going at a frightful speed; of a terrible executioner who roasted the heads he struck off, of animals, real and mythical, and endless other things. Of many of these dreams he offers explanations—*e.g.* a magnificent procession of men represents to him the wealth of experimental knowledge passing before his mental vision; himself on horseback with a heavy load behind his back, the incubus on his mind of the unfinished part of his work; an unfurnished house, "that I had invited the Highest to me into an unprepared and untidy hut," etc. etc. Many to him are mysterious and inexplicable; "I can," he says in one place, "make guesses about this; but I am not allowed to look upon them as certain, because it concerns something in the future"; and elsewhere: "God speaks with me, and I comprehend only the least portion of what He says, because it is in representations, of which I understand as yet very little."

These dreams and visions were often accompanied by violent tremors, prostration, trances, sweatings, and one one occasion, at least, by swooning. During their continuance he enjoyed preternatural sleep, often lasting from ten to thirteen hours. Doubtless the system was exhausted by the strain put upon it—for all this time he was doing hard literary work during the day—and Nature asserted her demands. We cannot wonder, either, that he



became so absorbed as sometimes to pass his friends in the street, and not return their salutations.

These things, the reader will be inclined to say, are common experiences with all enthusiasts. Granted; but then Swedenborg was not an enthusiast, and there were aspects of his case that differed from these common experiences. Far from being a victim of religious excitement, we find him watching and studying his own case with the eye of a scientific observer. He was well aware that people are sometimes led away by emotion to imagine all kinds of things, and was careful to guard himself against such extravagances. He observes (October 6x7) "how easily human beings may be led astray by other kinds of spirits [*i.e.* evil spirits], who represent themselves to men according to the quality of the love of each." Of one of his visions, he remarks: "Our Lord knows best what all this means"; and, again: "God grant that I do not mistake in this; I believe I do not." After a night of horrid dreams and bodily tremors, he says: "I began thinking whether all this was not mere phantasy"; so it is evident that he was not a prey to his own imaginations.

Swedenborg's case is indeed unique. We can understand a monk or a nun, or even a Protestant enthusiast, dreaming dreams and seeing visions; but for a man living an active life in the world, a mathematician and logician, and a devotee of natural science, to succumb to mental illusions seems most unlikely. Nor do we hear of any sudden "conversion" to account for the change that came over him. Were these experiences, then, an indication of mental disorder? If they were, we again have a case absolutely unique, for at the time these strange events were happening he was engaged in writing and publishing philosophical

works which have been acknowledged by some of the most brilliant intellects of our time as revealing astounding mental powers; and he continued to write and publish for nearly thirty years other works, which are thoroughly sane and consistent, and, to those who have most carefully examined them, bear evidence of more than mortal wisdom. I leave the case in the hands of sceptics to explain as they can.

Whatever we may think of his mental condition, there is something touching and beautiful in the thought of this middle-aged philosopher thus renouncing his life's ambitions, and in childlike obedience to what he believed to be a call from God, turning his back upon the wisdom of the world which had been as meat and drink to him. A friend of kings and princes, and an intellectual prince himself, we see him now, a stranger in a strange land, all alone in the darkness of the night, pouring out his soul in prayer to God, and singing simple hymns, such as he had probably learnt at his mother's knee.<sup>1</sup> It is, indeed, a remarkable picture.

A word as to the theology of these self-revelations. Swedenborg was educated in the evangelical doctrines of the Lutheran church, and does not seem to have questioned their adequacy until middle life, excepting on the subject of faith alone, on which his father also held broader views than most of his clerical brethren. This diary shows that the son still held by his early teaching. The doctrine of a personal Trinity appears again and again; the distinctive offices of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost being accepted in a strictly orthodox manner. He prays to God for Christ's sake, and pleads the blood

<sup>1</sup> A favourite one was "Jesus is my best of friends," printed in Dr R. L. Tafel's *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 1127.

and merits of the Saviour. He deprecates the allowing of the understanding to be mixed up with matters of faith, averring that "faith is separated from our understanding and resides above it."<sup>1</sup>

All these ideas were greatly modified in a few years' time. Signs of coming change appear already, particularly in his views of the nature and unity of God, and the supreme Divinity of Jesus Christ. In an early entry, we read: "Christ, in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead, must alone be addressed in prayer. . . . He is omnipotent, and the only Mediator." And, again, a prayer, quoted above, was put into his mouth, beginning: "O thou Almighty Jesus Christ."

At this time he had no clear idea of the mission to which he was to be called, but several passages show that he had some foreshadowing of it. On April 21 × 22 he writes: "Because it seemed to me I was so far separated from God that I could not yet think of Him in a sufficiently vivid manner, I came into a state of doubt whether I should not direct my journey homewards; a crowd of involved reasons then came, and my body was seized with a tremor. Yet I gathered courage and perceived that I had come [to Holland] to do that which was best of all, and that I had received a talent for the promotion of God's glory; I saw that all had helped together to this end; that the Spirit had been with me from my youth for this very purpose; wherefore I considered myself unworthy of life unless I followed the straight direction. I then smiled at the other seducing thoughts; and

<sup>1</sup> After his full enlightenment, he had a vision of a magnificent temple in heaven, over the portal of which was written: "Now it is allowable to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith," and he constantly insists that faith is impossible where reason is ignored.

thus at luxury, riches, and distinction, which I had pursued."

On September 29 × 30, he had a vision of a most beautiful palace, and "was told that it was resolved in the society that I should become an immortal member of it, which no one ever before had been, unless he had died." He seemed to be living in the gable end of that palace.—"This signified that what I had written there with God's help, was of such a nature that it would lead me on further and that I would see still more glorious things."

At times he was in doubt as to what lay before him. "All this," he writes (April 28th and 29), "it seems to me, represents that I must employ my remaining time in writing upon that which is higher, and not upon worldly things which are far below; and, indeed, that I must write about that which concerns the very centre of all, and that which concerns Christ. May God be so gracious as to enlighten me respecting my duty; for I am still in some obscurity as to the direction whither I am to turn."

An extraordinary message came to him on April 25 × 26. "It was represented to me in a certain manner that I was not to contaminate myself by reading other books treating on theology and similar subjects; because all this I have from the Word of God and the Holy Spirit." A significant comment upon this is the remark of Pastor Ferelius, who, on the occasion of a visit to him in his old age, found him "sitting and writing at a round table in the middle of the room, with the Hebrew Bible before him, which constituted his whole library."

This remarkable diary ends with the entry of October 26 × 27; but we have further experiences related in other places. The most

important of these is the account given by Carl Robsahm, from Swedenborg's own description, of the appearance of the Lord to the latter, some time in April 1745. There is no need to quote the particulars, which have already appeared in several former biographies; but the concluding part of the account is important as it marks the turning point in our author's life. Whether the vision was an illusion or not, it definitely determined the character of his succeeding years.

It first appeared to him at the inn after dinner, and somewhat alarmed him. "I went home," he said; "and during the night the same man revealed himself to me again, but I was not frightened now. He then said that He was the Lord God, the Creator of the world, and the Redeemer, and that He had chosen me to explain to men the spiritual sense of the Scripture, and that He Himself would explain to me what I should write on this subject; that same night also were opened to me, so that I became thoroughly convinced of their reality, the world of spirits, heaven, and hell, and I recognised there many acquaintances of every condition of life. From that day I gave up the study of all worldly science, and laboured in spiritual things, according as the Lord had commanded me to write. Afterwards the Lord opened, daily very often, the eyes of my spirit, so that, in the middle of the day, I could see into the other world, and in a state of perfect wakefulness converse with angels and spirits."

It is not sufficient to answer to this: "The man must have been mad," unless we are prepared to say that God never did or could communicate His will directly to any man. If Swedenborg was thus favoured, we shall certainly find

evidence of it in his works, and to these we must turn for the only rational solution of the question.

## CHAPTER VII

### SEER AND THEOLOGIAN

WE have further insight into the development of Swedenborg's mind and life at the transition period in his *Adversaria*, a note-book of Biblical studies, written between 1745 and 1747, and in his *Spiritual Diary* which records his experiences from day to day among the inhabitants of the spiritual world. Neither of these works was published by himself, so we cannot regard them in the same way as his other writings.<sup>1</sup> They were intended for his own private use; but, read with proper discretion, and in the light of his authoritative teachings, they are full of interest, and help us to understand his later works. Some uncertainty is still apparent in the theological views embodied in these records, but there is evidence of growing knowledge and of full confidence in his Divine mission.

The *Adversaria*, says Dr R. L. Tafel, "marks the second step which Swedenborg took in the investigation of the Divine Word. The exploration of the merely literal sense he did not carry farther than the third chapter of Genesis. . . . He returned to the first chapter of Genesis with a view of discovering there, not the creation of the natural world, but the creation and es-

<sup>1</sup> Recent investigations show that the Latin text of the *Spiritual Diary* is very imperfect, in some cases serious errors having crept in. The author's meaning is often misconstrued, and quite needlessly obscured. The manuscript is now being phototyped, and a new edition will probably be produced before long.



tablishment of the Kingdom of God.

"He now recognised the existence of an interior sense in the Word of God in the following words, 'That in the Mosaic account of creation there is everywhere a double meaning of the words, viz., a spiritual as well as a natural, appears clearly to the apprehension of every man from the tree of life and the tree of knowledge in the midst of the garden: for life and knowledge are spiritual, and yet are attributed to a tree, for this reason, that whatsoever originates in the ultimate parts of nature, on account of deriving its origin from heaven, involves something celestial in what is terrestrial, or something spiritual in what is natural; and it does so on this ground, that everything that is represented in the Divine mind, cannot but be carried out in reality in the ultimate parts of nature, and be formed there according to the idea of heaven. There results hence a correspondence of all things, which, with the Divine permission, we shall follow out in its proper series'" (*Adversaria*, i. No. 23).<sup>1</sup>

"The *Adversaria* furnish remarkable evidence of the activity and fertility of their author's mind. Ranging from Genesis to Jeremiah, and forming in Dr Tafel's edition<sup>2</sup> nine volumes, each containing about as much matter as this book [over 600 pages], they were produced in less than two years, the last entry being dated 9th February, 1747. Swedenborg appears to have thought through his pen."<sup>3</sup> Such a literary *tour de force* is almost without a parallel.

About this time also our author

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 951 and 952.

<sup>2</sup> Published at Tübingen by Dr Immanuel Tafel, Professor of Philosophy and Librarian to the University, between 1842 and 1854.

<sup>3</sup> *Emanuel Swedenborg, His Life and Writings*, by William White, vol. i. p. 249.

was engaged upon his copious Biblical indices, which occupy some two thousand pages of MS., and contain besides a concordance of passages for ready reference, a dictionary of correspondences and other notes. He further prepared an index to the *Adversaria* and to the *Spiritual Diary*, filling in this manner close upon a thousand pages more. All this was preparatory to future works.

The *Spiritual Diary* contains a detailed account of Swedenborg's experiences in the spiritual world, together with many statements of doctrine. The record extends from February 1747 to 29th April 1765; but the entries are not regular, and many are without date. The early portion, moreover (up to 9th October 1747), is missing, and the nature of its contents is only known to us from the author's index.

The character of the *Spiritual Diary* is very different from the *Dream-Book* already referred to. Instead of terrorising dreams and incomprehensible, or dimly comprehended, visions we have a sober account of things seen and heard, extraordinary enough in some cases, but no longer perplexing to the beholder and auditor. It is a traveller's description of an unknown country.

To most uninitiated readers the *Spiritual Diary* will seem strange and unconvincing. Surely, they will say, the man must be romancing, if he is not beside himself. But it goes without saying that any account of such experiences must seem incredible to most persons, and more or less strange to all. To understand them, we need some acquaintance with the author's spiritual philosophy. It is unfortunate that many persons have drawn their limited knowledge of Swedenborg from his private diaries, which they had not the capacity to

understand from ignorance of his systematic teachings. So they have concluded that he is erratic and visionary, and that there is little to be learnt from him. Studied with proper doctrinal aids, these remarkable records are full of interest, and worthy of attentive consideration. The reader who is willing to accept such aid and to set aside his prejudices will have the realities of the spirit life presented to him more forcibly and reasonably than the imagination of Dante or Milton could portray them. Let him remember, however, that what he reads are private memoranda of extraordinary experiences, not perhaps fully understood by the subject of them, and he will be in a position to form a reasonable opinion on the matter. But a just judgment of the man and his teachings must be based on his known life and published works, to the further consideration of which latter we shall shortly proceed.

Swedenborg retained his position as Assessor of the Royal Board of Mines until the middle of 1747, when he retired on a pension of half his salary. The documents relating to his retirement, which have been preserved to us, are of great importance as evidence of his undoubted sanity and mental capability at the time he was undergoing the remarkable experiences we have just been considering.

The Board of Mines in Swedenborg's time consisted of a president, who always belonged to the highest order of nobility, two councillors of mines, and about six assessors, of whom Swedenborg was one. In the spring of 1747 one of the councillors retired, and Swedenborg was unanimously recommended as his successor by his colleagues. Instead of accepting the position, he addressed a memorial to the King in

the following terms. The memorial is dated 2nd June 1747:—

"Most mighty and most gracious King,—Your Royal Majesty's Board of Mines, at your behest, have sent in their humble proposition with regard to the vacant place of Councillor of Mines on their Board and they have most humbly proposed me for this office *in primo loco*; but as I feel it incumbent on me to finish the work on which I am now engaged, I would most humbly ask Your Royal Majesty to select another in my place for this position, and most graciously release me from office. . . .

"It is my humble wish, that you graciously release me from office, but without bestowing upon me any higher rank; which I most earnestly beseech you not to do. I further pray that I may receive half of my salary, and that you will graciously grant me leave to go abroad, to some place where I may finish the important work on which I am now engaged.

"I remain with deep respect, my most gracious Sovereign, Your Royal Majesty's most humble and dutiful subject,

"EMAN. SWEDENBORG."

A Royal Decree releasing Swedenborg from his office, "which he has hitherto filled with renown," was issued on the 12th June, and on the 15th was handed in to the Board.

"All the members of the Royal Board regretted losing so worthy a colleague, and they asked the Assessor to kindly continue attending the sessions of the Board, until all those cases should be adjudicated that had been commenced during his attendance at the Board, to which the Assessor kindly assented."<sup>1</sup>

The final leave-taking was on the 17th July. In the minutes for that day, we find the following entry:—

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Board, 15th June 1747.

"Assessor Swedenborg, who intends as soon as possible to commence his new journeys abroad, came up for the purpose of taking leave of the Royal Board. He thanked all those at the Royal Board for the favour and kindness he had received from them during his connexion with the Board, and commended himself to their further friendly remembrances.

"The Royal Board thanked the Assessor for the minute care and fidelity with which he had attended to the duties of his office as an Assessor up to the present time; they wished him a prosperous journey and a happy return; after which he left."

Thus ended Swedenborg's long connection with the Board of Mines. His reason for retiring while still in the full vigour of life was not only that he might have more time to devote to his new work, but that his mind might not be distracted unnecessarily by worldly concerns; for the spiritual influences by which he was now guided were withdrawn in the degree in which he allowed himself to be immersed in worldly concerns.<sup>1</sup> He writes in his *Spiritual Diary* (4th March 1748):

"Whereas now I have been almost three years, or thirty-three months, in that state in which, my mind being withdrawn from corporeal things, I could be in the societies of spiritual and celestial [spirits], and yet be like another man in the society of men, without any difference, which spirits also wondered at;—when, however, I

<sup>1</sup> No one has insisted more strongly than Swedenborg on the necessity of an active life in the world to a healthy religious condition, and as a preventive of the delusions sometimes induced by evil spirits; but his own case was abnormal, as he always maintained. He did not retire from the world that he might give himself to lonely contemplation or to secure his own salvation; but because he felt himself called to a great mission, which required his whole energies.

intensely adhered to worldly things in thought, as when I had care concerning necessary expenses, about which I this day wrote a letter, so that my mind was for some time detained therewith, I fell, as it were, into a corporeal state, so that the spirits could not converse with me, as they also said, because they were as though absent (from me). A case rather similar occurred before; whence I am enabled to know that spirits cannot speak with a man who is much devoted to worldly and corporeal cares;—for bodily concerns draw down, as it were, the ideas of the mind and immerse them in corporeal things."

Swedenborg did not remain long in his own country after his retirement, though there is no record of the date when he commenced his new journey. He was in Holland, as a memorandum of accounts in his commonplace-book shows, in November 1747, and remained there until October 1748. A further memorandum records that he "took lodgings [in London] on the 23rd of November, 1748, for six shillings per week for half a year; if the rooms are taken for a whole year there is a deduction made of thirty-two shillings, so that the whole rent amounts to fourteen pounds";<sup>1</sup> a modest sum for a noble philosopher and friend of kings to pay.

The object of Swedenborg's coming to London was to arrange for the publication of the first volume of *Arcana Cælestia*, an exposition of the spiritual sense of Genesis and Exodus. The work was issued anonymously by John Lewis of Paternoster Row, and, it is to be feared, fell very flat on the market. From an undated entry in the *Spiritual Diary* (No. 4422), we learn that only four copies were sold in two months; but this was only to be expected in such a careless and

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 386.



sceptical age. The book also being published in Latin, only appealed to the learned, who would not be likely to lend a ready ear to the lucubrations of an anonymous foreigner. The few who did read, however, must have been astonished at what met their eyes. They had surely never seen the like before.

A brief preface maintained the spiritual character of the Holy Scriptures, and showed that without a knowledge of their internal meaning they were like "a body without a soul." "It is impossible," the author continued, "whilst the mind abides in the literal sense only, to see that it is full of such spiritual contents. Thus, in the first chapters of Genesis, nothing is discoverable from the literal sense, but that they treat of the creation of the world, and of the garden of Eden which is called Paradise, and also of Adam as the first-created man; and scarcely a single person supposes them to relate to anything besides. But that they contain *arcana* which were never heretofore revealed, will sufficiently appear from the following pages; where it will be seen that the first chapter of Genesis, in its internal sense, treats of the NEW CREATION of man, or of his REGENERATION, in general, and specifically of the most ancient church; and this in such a manner, that there is not a single syllable which does not represent, signify, and involve something spiritual."

As we shall discuss the contents of the *Arcana Cælestia* in another place, there is no need to say more here, further than to point out the striking difference between the character of its statements, and those contained in the *Diaries*, *Adversaria*, etc. Here there is no uncertainty, hesitancy, or doubt; but a calm unfolding of what the writer believed to be positive truth. We notice a change in some of the terms em-

ployed, which are now crystallised into the forms they will hold throughout the long series of subsequent works. Thus, the appellation of the Divine Saviour in *The Worship and Love of God* was the "Only Begotten" or "Son of God"; in the early part of the *Spiritual Diary*, as in the greater part of the *Adversaria*, it is "God-Messiah," whereas in *Arcana Cælestia* and all later works the term "Lord" is used, corresponding to Jehovah of the Old Testament, and intended to imply that "in Jesus Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."<sup>1</sup> In commencing the exposition of the internal sense of Genesis, he writes: "In the following work, by the LORD is solely meant Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who is called the Lord;

<sup>1</sup> The gradual clarifying of Swedenborg's ideas in regard to the Deity, and also on other important doctrines, is strikingly shown in a lengthy note (No. 165) in Dr R. L. Tafel's *Documents* (vol. ii. pp. 1096-1113). Here we read: "In the Diary for 1744 the Son of God is almost constantly called Christ. And here it must be observed that before October 1744, when Swedenborg began writing his work on the *Worship and Love of God*, he always spoke of the Lord as 'Christ.' In that work, and also in the *Adversaria* up to Genesis, chapter iv., he called Him the 'Only Begotten of the Highest,' or 'of God'; from chapter iv. to chapter xxxiv. 'Messiah'; and through the rest of the *Adversaria*, 'God-Messiah.' This appellation he continued to use in the *Spiritual Diary*, until January 11, 1748 (No. 460). From that date until January 21 (No. 467) he speaks of 'Jesus Christ,' and 'our Saviour' in connection with 'God-Messiah.' From January 21 (No. 489) to February 5 (No. 641) he uses the term 'Jesus Christ,' 'Saviour of the World,' and the 'Only Lord' (*Dominus Unicus*); he also speaks of 'our Lord' (No. 568), of the 'Lord God' (No. 612), and of the 'Lord Jesus' (No. 617), alternating these terms with 'the Lord' from January 26 (No. 564). From February 5 (No. 641) he uses the term 'Lord' exclusively; although on February 9th (No. 689) the expression the 'Word of God-Messiah' occurs once more."

without other names. He is acknowledged and adored as the Lord throughout all heaven, because he has all power in heaven and earth." (No. 14). This doctrine of the exclusive Divinity of Jesus Christ is the keynote of all of Swedenborg's theology.

Mr Worcester remarks that "the style of the *Arcana* differs materially from that of the earlier *Adversaria*. It is no longer that of an explorer, just discovering, or about to discover, or just hearing things entirely new to him. It is now that of a master, full to overflowing with knowledge that had become familiar to him, and that lay broadly and clearly under his view, from which he had only to choose what would be most intelligible and most useful to his readers. He no longer doubts whether what he writes is quite correct and is to be printed. It is apparent that he is writing and printing under clearly recognised authority. Yet the careful student finds some minor points, though marvellously few, in which the author's later experience of twenty years developed additional clearness and slight modification."<sup>1</sup>

A second volume of *Arcana Cœlestia* was issued in 1750, in parts, both in Latin and English, and was announced in a lengthy advertisement by the publisher.<sup>2</sup> "This work," he said, "is intended to be such an exposition of the whole Bible as was never attempted in any language before. The author is a learned foreigner, who wrote and printed the first volume of the same work but last year, all in Latin, which may be seen at my shop in Paternoster Row, as above mentioned. . . . This, then, may be said

of our author. He has struck out a new path through this deep abyss, which no man ever trod before; he has left all the commentators and expositors to stand on their own footing; he neither meddles nor interferes with any of them; his thoughts are all his own; and the ingenious and sublime turn he has given to everything in the Scriptures, he has copied from no man; and therefore, even in this respect, he has some title to the regard of the ingenious and learned world."

The work, we are told, was printed in "a grand and pompous manner," and sold at an extremely low price. "It is the generous author's absolute command that it should be so, who, it is plain, wants neither purse nor spirit to carry on his laudable undertaking."

Notwithstanding small encouragement in the way of sales, the publication went on year by year until the work was completed in eight quarto volumes in the year 1756. The English translation, however, was not continued after the second volume.

Meanwhile Swedenborg was gathering new experience, and planning further works. He resided for the most part in Stockholm, sending his manuscript from time to time to Mr Lewis in London. He took an active part in the Diet of his native country, and went about as usual among his friends, few, if any, knowing of his extraordinary experiences, or guessing that he was the author of these strange Latin tomes.

In 1758, he again journeyed to London, where he published four small works, *The Earths in the Universe*, *The Last Judgment*, *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine*, a treatise *On the White Horse of the Apocalypse*, and a larger one, perhaps the best known of all his writings, on *Heaven and Hell*.

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Mission of Emanuel Swedenborg*, by John Worcester. Boston: Roberts Bros., 1892, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> For a copy of this advertisement see *Documents*, vol. ii, pp. 492-497.

All these were remarkable works, and excited considerable interest and curiosity. Between 1757 and 1759, he also wrote a voluminous exposition of the Book of Revelation, on similar lines to the *Arcana Cœlestia*, under the title of *The Apocalypse Explained*. The work was never entirely completed, and was replaced later (in 1765) by a smaller one entitled *The Apocalypse Revealed*. In its English form the earlier work fills six large octavo volumes, and is treasured by students of Swedenborg as a work of great value.

In the spring of 1762, this wonderful old man, now seventy-four years of age, set out on another expedition, this time to Amsterdam, to which city he was about to transfer his publishing; probably, suggests Dr Tafel, because of the rejection of his teachings by the clergy and the leading men of England. At any rate, he published nothing further in England beyond a pamphlet on *The Intercourse of the Soul and the Body*, which appeared in 1769.

At Amsterdam were published the following works:—In 1763, *The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem respecting the Lord, the Sacred Scripture, Life, and Faith*, in four separate treatises; *Continuation concerning the Last Judgment and the Spiritual World*; and *Angelic Wisdom respecting the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom*. In 1764 appeared *Angelic Wisdom respecting the Divine Providence*; in 1766, *The Apocalypse Revealed*; in 1768, *The Delights of Wisdom concerning Conjugal Love*, the first of the theological works to which Swedenborg attached his name; in 1769, *A Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church, signified by the New Jerusalem in the Revelation*; and, last, though not least, in 1771, *The True Christian Religion*.

Two other publications of a dif-

ferent character may be mentioned as belonging to this period, which show that, with his transcendental studies, he had not ceased to take an interest in mundane affairs. The Transactions of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences for April, May, and June 1763, contain a paper by Swedenborg on the laying of marble; and in 1766, our author republished in Amsterdam his *New Method of finding the Longitude of Places on Land and at Sea*.

These publications necessitated many journeys between Sweden and Holland, or England, which were undertaken quite alone and without mishap from his seventy-fourth to his eighty-fourth years. Nothing but a strong conviction of his Divine mission could have induced him, at such a time of life to risk the perils and discomforts of travel by sea and land, and to endure the loneliness of a life of protracted exile. When he started on his last expedition he was in his eighty-third year, yet he fearlessly undertook the journey, confident that God would protect him and preserve his life until his work was finished. He lived to see his *True Christian Religion* delivered from the press, and to write an appendix to it, as well as one or two other brief papers. For some reason, possibly at the invitation of English receivers of his teachings, of whom there was now a small but growing number scattered up and down the country, he crossed over to London in August 1771, and remained there to the close of his life.

When once it became known that Swedenborg was the author of these remarkable books, and that he professed to have open intercourse with spirits and angels, he became the object of much interest and curiosity. "Unexpectedly to everybody," wrote Jung-Stilling, "this intelligent, learned, and pious man



began to have intercourse with spirits. He made no secret of this, but frequently at table, even in large companies, and in the midst of the most rational and scientific conversations, would say, 'On this point I conversed not long ago with the apostle Paul, with Luther, or some other deceased person.' It can easily be imagined that the persons present opened their mouths and eyes, and wondered whether he was in his sound senses. Still occasionally he has furnished proofs, against which no objection can be raised. The veracity of these relations has been impugned, and the good gentleman has even been charged with imposture; but this charge I deny emphatically. Swedenborg was no impostor, but a pious Christian man."<sup>1</sup> When questioned, he spoke freely of his experiences, but never obtruded them on others. The Rev. Nicholas Collin, Rector of the Swedish Church in Philadelphia, stated that in Stockholm, "no one presumed to doubt that he held some kind of supernatural intercourse with the Spiritual World,"<sup>2</sup> and, indeed, many had had striking evidence of the fact.<sup>3</sup> He constantly asserted his Divine commission, fearless of the ridicule that his claim sometimes brought upon him. Count Höpken once asked Swedenborg why he had published what so many regarded as mere visions and fictions, and which led them to despise the admirable doctrines contained in his works. "I was commanded by the Lord to write and publish them," replied Swedenborg; "do not suppose that, without such a positive order, I should have thought of publishing things which I well knew many would regard as falsehoods, and

which would bring ridicule upon myself."<sup>1</sup> Even to the King he insisted upon the truth of his asseverations. In a memorial dated 10th May 1770, protesting against the ban that had been placed upon his books by the Consistory of Gothenburg, he wrote: "That our Saviour visibly revealed Himself before me, and commanded me to do what I have done, and what I have still to do; and that thereupon He permitted me to have intercourse with angels and spirits, I have declared before the whole of Christendom, as well in England, Holland, Germany, and Denmark, as in France and Spain, and also on various occasions in this country before their Royal Majesties, and especially when I enjoyed the grace to eat at their table, in the presence of the whole royal family, and also of five senators and others; at which time my mission constituted the sole topic of conversation."<sup>2</sup> To Count Tessin he said that "God had granted him revelations of this kind, that he might lead the world away from darkness and error, which of late had increased to such a degree, that the very existence of God was in effect denied."<sup>3</sup>

But Swedenborg did not trust to mere asseveration to convince the world of the truth of his doctrines and visions. In the same memorial to the Swedish King to which we have referred above, he appeals to his critics' reason, and truthfully says that in his writings "much may be found which has never before been discovered except by real vision, and intercourse with those who are in the spiritual world. . . . That our Saviour permits me to experience this, is not on my own account but for the sake of a sublime

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 486 and 487.

<sup>2</sup> *White's Life*, vol. ii. p. 346.

<sup>3</sup> See chap. xvi. *Signs of Seership*.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 375.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 399.

interest which concerns the eternal welfare of all Christians." <sup>1</sup>

There can be no question of the seriousness of Swedenborg's claim. He told Count Höpken that "he was too old to sport with spiritual things, and too much concerned for his eternal happiness to yield to such foolish notions, assuring him, on his hopes of salvation, that imagination produced in him none of his revelations, which were true, and from what he had heard and seen." <sup>2</sup>

In his *Spiritual Diary* (No. 102) Swedenborg tells us that spirits spoke of him as "strange, wonderful, unaccountable"; it is no wonder that he should appear so to men on earth, and that many should find it impossible to believe in his experiences. Let them put these on one side, then, for the present, and bring their reason and intelligence to bear upon the doctrines he taught. Perhaps when the truth of these makes itself felt, the visions will seem more possible, indeed, inevitable.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THEOLOGICAL TEACHINGS

To appreciate the theological reformation that Swedenborg instituted, we must consider the state of the current theology of his day. "Towards the middle of the [eighteenth] century," says Leslie Stephen, "the decay of the old schools of theology was becoming complete"; the creed of orthodoxy was practically dead, having proved itself "incapable of satisfying the instincts of various classes of the population, and the perception of its logical defects was the consequence, not the cause, of the gradual break-up." Swedenborg was as fully alive to the

moral insufficiency of the theology of his time as to its logical defects: and set himself (acting, as he believed, under a Divine injunction) to rehabilitate it in both respects. Two oft-quoted aphorisms of his will suffice to convey an idea of the position he takes: "All religion has relation to life, and the life of religion is to do good"; <sup>1</sup> "Now it is allowable to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith." <sup>2</sup> He propounded a rational theology as the groundwork and motive power of a good and useful life.

Though faith was practically dead in the eighteenth century, dogma survived, and the current dogmas of the Protestant sects were these (the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches maintained the same with sundry additions):—The Godhead was held to consist of three Divine Persons, each by Himself God and Lord, and to each of Whom distinctive offices belonged. The Father was regarded as the embodiment of Divine justice, and in nature was stern, demanding, and awful; the Son looked upon mankind with eyes of pity, and desired to save them from the wrath of His Father; while the Holy Ghost was conceived as an indefinite personality, who imparted grace and sanctification to the elect. Salvation was believed to be attained by an act of faith, and had nothing to do with man's own deeds; some, indeed, teaching that good works were a hindrance to salvation, and many that God arbitrarily elected those who should be saved, and condemned the rest *en masse*, including ignorant heathen and tender infants, to eternal misery. This eternal misery consisted in perpetual burning in material fire and brimstone, and unnamable torture by malignant fiends, arbitrarily inflicted as a punishment for sin,

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 375 and 376.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 409.

<sup>1</sup> *Doctrine of Life*, No. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *True Christian Religion*, No. 508.

actual or "original." That the everlasting burning was of material fire was directly asserted, and implied also in the doctrine of the resurrection of the material body. The very body, it was taught, in which sin was committed, was that on which punishment would be inflicted, and therefore this would be raised, and reunited to its spiritual part, at the last day. The saints, also, would enter into bliss with the same bodies that they possessed on earth, and their joys would consist in perpetual praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty; together with occasional contemplation of the tortures of the lost, that they might be made more sensible of the Divine goodness to themselves.

A favourite topic of the preacher was the Last Day, when Christ should descend upon earth once more, to judge the quick and the dead, and afterwards to burn up the world with fire. The godless were appealed to in terrifying language to flee from the wrath to come, and the saints were promised that, having regained their bodies, they should be caught up into the clouds to meet their Lord.

Faith was magnified at the expense of good works, and by faith was usually meant credulous belief, especially in the dogma of Christ's substitutional sacrifice. The doctrine of substitution is so glozed over in our day that its meaning is modified or obscured; but to the eighteenth-century divine it was a simple matter,—Christ took the punishment of the believer's sins on Himself, and the sinner was thenceforth regarded by God as guiltless. Change of life was not essential to forgiveness, provided that faith in Christ's merits was present.

The teaching in regard to the Bible was that every word was dictated by God just as it stands, and all was to be accepted as liter-

ally true. No criticisms of science, history, or reason were to be allowed any weight against its express statements.

These dogmas, though nominally accepted by most, were believed in by few; a vapid Deism was the creed of most who made any profession of religion. Sir William Blackstone, we are told, "had the curiosity, early in the reign of George III., to go from church to church and hear every clergyman of note in London. He says that he did not hear a single discourse which had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero; and that it would have been impossible for him to discover, from what he heard, whether the preacher were a follower of Confucius, of Mahomet, or of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

"The reason why but few at the present day have religion," says Swedenborg, "is: First, because it is not known that the Lord [*i.e.* Jesus Christ] is the Only God who rules heaven and earth; and thus that He is God in person and in essence, in whom is a Trinity: when yet the whole of religion is based on the knowledge of God, and on His adoration and worship. Second, because it is not known that faith is nothing else but truth; and because it is not known whether that which is called faith is truth, or not. Third, because it is not known what charity is, nor consequently what good and evil are. Fourth, because it is not known what eternal life is."

Swedenborg believed that he was Divinely commissioned to supply the true knowledge that was so conspicuously lacking; and he propounded a new system of theology, which even those who do not accept his views cannot deny to be both rational and practical. Regarding it

<sup>1</sup> *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, by Abbey and Overton, vol. ii. p. 37.



as his own achievement, we can only wonder at the profound insight he displays, and his immense daring in attempting such a task ; but we prefer to look upon it otherwise, and to accept his statement that he was only an instrument in the great work he undertook.

Swedenborg's theological teachings are to be found scattered throughout his writings, but the following are especially devoted to systematic statement of them :—*The True Christian Religion ; The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine ; The Four Leading Doctrines, viz., of the Lord, of the Sacred Scriptures, of Life, and of Faith ; The Divine Providence ; and A Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church.* It will be impossible to examine all of these in detail ; the better plan will be to give a general summary, with particular references when necessary.

The foundation stone of the whole system is the doctrine of the supreme Divinity of Jesus Christ. Although St Paul asserted that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily," and the early Christians accepted that view implicitly, the doctrine had been lost sight of for fifteen hundred years until revived by Swedenborg. The notion of a personal Trinity blinded the eyes to its absolute truth. Swedenborg teaches that, instead of Jesus Christ being only the second member of a Divine Trinity, the whole Trinity is centred in His Own Person. The Father is the inmost principle of the Divine, which no man hath seen or can know,—the exhaustless, ineffable Love of God ; the Son is the manifestation of God, the Divine Wisdom revealed to us in "the Word," as it has come to men in different forms, especially as "the Word made Flesh" ; the Holy Spirit is the effluent energy of Divinity, proceeding from the Father through the

Son, and operating in man to rouse, to console and to sanctify. All these constituents were embodied in the person of the Divine Saviour during his life on earth, as He Himself taught when He declared that the Father dwelling in Him was the author of His beneficent works ; and when He breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

That we read in the Gospels of an apparent separation between the Father and the Son, and of intercourse between them, does not vitiate this doctrine, when we remember that, at the Incarnation, Jesus took our frail humanity, and by slow degrees raised it to partnership with His Divinity. Until the human nature was made perfect, there was an appearance of separation from, and inferiority to, the indwelling Divine, but when His glorification was complete, Jesus declared that all power was given Him in heaven and in earth ; Humanity and Divinity were so perfectly united that He could say : "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

The teaching of any church as to the nature and character of God forms necessarily the central doctrine of its theological system. Upon the ideas that we entertain of God will depend our conception of His relations to His creatures, and their duty to Him. "In consequence of separating the Divine Trinity into three persons, each of which is declared to be God and Lord," says Swedenborg, "... a sort of frenzy has infected the whole system of theology, as well as the Christian church, so called from its Divine founder. . . . Men's minds are reduced by it into such a state of delirium that they do not know whether there is one God, or whether there are three. They confess but one God with their lips, while they

entertain the idea of three in their thoughts; so that their lips and their minds, or their words and their ideas, are at variance with each other: the consequence whereof is that they deny the existence of any God. This is the true source of the naturalism which is now so prevalent in the world. For I appeal to experience, while the lips confess but one God, and the mind entertains the idea of three, whether such confession of the lips, and such idea in the mind, do not mutually tend to destroy each other? Hence if there be any conception of God left in the understanding, it is that of a mere word or name, destitute of any true perception which implies a knowledge of Him."<sup>1</sup>

The restitution of the true doctrine of Trinity in Unity necessitated a reconsideration of the doctrine of the Atonement; since, if there are not three persons in the Trinity, it is impossible for one of these to offer Himself as a sacrifice to the clamant justice of another. The doctrine of the Atonement as taught by Swedenborg is that set forth by St Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." God is ever waiting to be gracious and can need no reconciliation to His creatures; these, however, need to be reconciled to Him, before they can be fitted to dwell in His presence, and it was to effect this reconciliation,—to bring back the wandering sheep to the fold,—that Christ came into the world. He took upon Himself human nature, that therein He might be "tempted in all points like as we are," and so might conquer and subdue the spiritual enemies that kept man in bondage. He became the champion of lost humanity, and made recovery possible when evil seemed to have become paramount. In this view of the Atonement, there

<sup>1</sup> *True Christian Religion*, No. 4.

is no substitution of the innocent for the guilty; yet all the merit belongs to the Saviour.

Swedenborg scouts all schemes of salvation that do not involve reformation of character; yet he is no work-monger. He recognises that man has no power to procure his own salvation, though he is gifted with absolute freedom to choose the good and reject the evil. Good actions should be done "as of himself; nevertheless under the belief that they are from the Lord operating with him and by him."<sup>1</sup> This is the same doctrine that St Paul teaches in his epistle to the Philippians (ii. 12, 13): "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

The necessity of perfect freedom in spiritual matters is strongly insisted upon by our author. Man is subject, he tells us, to influx from both good and evil spirits, but the Lord preserves a perfect equilibrium between these influences, which only the man himself can disturb. "In this equilibrium every man is kept as long as he lives in the world; and by means of it he is kept in that liberty of thinking, of willing, of speaking, and of doing, in which he can be reformed."<sup>2</sup> No spiritual acquisition can be permanent that is not appropriated in freedom; hence salvation is impossible without man's voluntary co-operation with God, for "a man would have nothing whereby he could reciprocally conjoin himself with the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

The acceptance of the doctrine of man's absolute spiritual freedom dispels many common misconceptions in regard to the work of salvation. Hope of reward or fear of punishment, though they may set the

<sup>1</sup> *True Christian Religion*, No. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Divine Providence*, No. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *True Christian Religion*, No. 485.

thoughts towards higher things, can produce no real spiritual change; no more can miracles, visions, or intercourse with the dead, because they may force belief against the will and the reason. We often hear of persons being brought to a knowledge of sin, and their need of salvation, on a bed of sickness; it will be surprising, therefore, to many to learn that no one can be reformed in sickness,<sup>1</sup> for then the mind is under coercion from fear, and the person may be incapable of self-control.

The whole question is summed up in the statement that, "No one is reformed in states that are not of rationality and liberty,"<sup>2</sup> a dictum which has a very wide bearing. If it is true, those who submit their reason to priests and dogmas for the sake of peace, and, as they think, their soul's salvation, are woefully misled. The peace they attain is a spurious peace, and their hope of salvation by these means is illusory. Equally deluded are those who seek the seclusion of the cloister or the hermit's cell, or in any way withdraw themselves from active life in the world, for their soul's benefit. They are simply paralysing spiritual growth, and postponing their hoped-for happiness. "*The life which leads to heaven is not a life of retirement from the world, but of action in the world; a life of piety without a life of charity [i.e. neighbourly love]—which can only be acquired in the world—does not lead to heaven; but a life of charity, which consists in acting sincerely and justly in every situation, engagement, and work, from an interior principle, that is, from a heavenly origin; and such an origin is in that life when man acts sincerely and justly because it is agreeable to the Divine Law. . . . A life of piety alone without charity*

. . . leads away from heaven as much as it is commonly believed to lead to heaven."<sup>1</sup> This passage sums up Swedenborg's doctrine of life and salvation.

Since salvation is the attainment of spiritual health, it is evident that eternal rewards and punishments cannot be arbitrarily bestowed. Before we can go to heaven, heaven must have come to us; and no one will go to hell, who has not first received hell into his soul. "The states of the interiors make heaven . . . heaven is within us, and not out of us."<sup>2</sup> "It can in no case be said that heaven is without or around anyone, but that it is within him; and this plainly shows how much they are deceived who believe that to go to heaven is to be elevated amongst angels, without any regard to the quality of the interior life, and thus that heaven may be conferred on anyone by an act of unconditional mercy; when the truth is, that if heaven is not within us, nothing of the heaven which is around can flow in and be received."<sup>3</sup>

Swedenborg's teachings in regard to the other life are so important and original that they demand more extended notice than we can give them in this chapter. We shall refer here to only one other point—viz. his statement that the future life is continuous with this; that there is no unconscious or semi-conscious interval between the death of the body and the commencement of the spiritual existence. This disposes of the idea that the dead of past generations are reserved for future judgment at the "great assize" to be held at the end of the world.

What then is the last judgment, of which we read so much in the New Testament? The last judgment, Swedenborg tells us, took place in

<sup>1</sup> *Divine Providence*, No. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 138.

<sup>1</sup> *Heaven and Hell*, No. 535.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* No. 54.



the year 1757, and was a spiritual occurrence. In the world of spirits, or intermediate state, were at that time collected myriads of spirits who had not yet passed to their eternal homes. The majority of these were diabolical or hypocritical, and their influence on the inhabitants of this lower earth was such, that if they had not been brought into order, they would have quickly destroyed all spiritual life among men. To avert such a catastrophe, a general judgment was executed upon them, and a reign of order established in the intermediate world. Swedenborg affirms that he was permitted to witness this judgment, and that the prophecies of the Gospels and the Revelation were fulfilled before his eyes. The powers of evil were placed under restraint, and the influx of new spiritual forces among men was made possible. The remarkable progress of the world since that time is a direct outcome of this judgment. Those who would deny this to be the cause, must be prepared to suggest some better reason for the unprecedented changes that have marked the history of the past hundred and fifty years.

The misconceptions of the religious world in regard to the Last Judgment have arisen from an insistence upon a barely literal interpretation of figurative language. The same habit has caused the nature of Christ's Second Coming to be misunderstood. The description of Christ's coming in the clouds of heaven, according to Swedenborg, is purely symbolical, and represents a new revelation of Divine truth from out the mists and clouds of the letter of the Word. Of this Second Coming, Swedenborg declared that He was the herald. It consisted in a revelation of the spiritual sense of the Divine Word, shining through and illuminating the letter, and dissipating its mysteries and ob-

scurities. Of this doctrine of the spiritual sense of Scripture we shall speak more fully in another place.

It will be seen that Swedenborg was no mere critic of current theology. While he attacked the corruptions that had marred and mutilated the pure gospel of Christ, he propounded a substantive system of doctrine that is at once consistent, rational, practical, and in many ways new. Theology with him is truly a science, based upon revealed knowledge and the facts of human experience, confirmed by reason, and ministering to the practical needs of life.

The religion that Swedenborg teaches is eminently wholesome and manly. It does not require that men shall withdraw themselves from the world, and deny themselves the pleasures of the body; such pleasures, however, must not be pursued from selfish motives, but as aids and stimulants to useful labour. True religion affects the whole man, soul and body, heart and intellect, thoughts, motives, words and deeds. In most religious systems the intellect is subordinated to faith in mysterious dogmas; but Swedenborg announced the emancipation the intellect in spiritual matters, and taught that reason is the inseparable handmaid of faith. Thus he elevated our ideas of faith; at the same time he enlarged our conceptions of charity and good works. Charity, he tells us, is not a mere sentiment; nor are its offices limited to the service of the poor and needy, but consist in "doing good to our neighbour daily and continually, not only to our neighbour individually, but to our neighbour collectively; and this cannot be effected but by a man's doing what is good and just, in whatever office, business, and employment he is engaged, and with whomsoever he has any connection."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *True Christian Religion*, No. 423.

Such good works, however, are not to be done with the idea of merit, or hope of reward; the truly charitable "place no merit in their works, for they never think of merit, but only of their duty, which as good citizens they are bound to perform."<sup>1</sup> Rewards and punishments have no place as motives to virtue in the "true Christian religion," as taught by Swedenborg. All goodness vanishes from men's deeds, however beneficent they may appear, when the thought of merit or reward enters; the good man only desires to be a channel of the Divine beneficence, and humbly acknowledges that all the impulse, all the power, and all the will to do good come from the Lord, to Whom therefore all merit belongs. He does not even expect to be rewarded in heaven for his good deeds, but only looks forward to the higher life as affording wider scope for the fulfilment of the Divine will, and greater opportunities for usefulness. Similarly, we are taught that the fear of hell, or of punishment in any form, is not a means of salvation. Salvation is simply deliverance from self, and fear is the outcome of selfishness. "Perfect love casteth out fear," and perfect love is the goal of Christian effort; a goal only to be reached, however, by entire submission to the Divine will, so that the perfect love of God will be in us, prompting "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Such is the practical teaching of Swedenborg; if it does not present us with a worthy ideal of true religion, the ideal is far to seek.

## CHAPTER IX

### SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY

Two causes conduce to the futility of speculative reasoning on Divine

<sup>1</sup> *True Christian Religion*, No. 423.

and spiritual subjects; the pre-conceived notions of theologians, on the one hand, and, on the other, the persistent refusal of materialistic philosophers to acknowledge the operation of spiritual forces in the processes of nature. The conflict between science and religion mainly arises from ignorance on both sides: the scientist cannot see what to the theologian are palpable truths, while the theologian is too often lacking in knowledge of physical science, and fears to be enlightened. A true philosophy must take cognisance of spirit as well as matter, and show the relation in which the two stand to each other. Swedenborg is unique among philosophers in combining a high degree of spiritual enlightenment with a profound acquaintance with the facts of nature.

In considering Swedenborg's system of spiritual philosophy, we are again placed in the dilemma of having either to accept his claim to special enlightenment, or to believe that it was all evolved from his inner consciousness. To many, the latter presents the greater difficulty; but let each one judge for himself. Of the profundity and originality of Swedenborg's teachings on such subjects as the nature and character of God, the origin of evil, the creation and preservation of the universe, the relation of spirit to matter, the constitution of the human mind, and on life and death, there can be no question.<sup>1</sup> His

<sup>1</sup> A recent presentation of Swedenborg's philosophical teachings by the late Rev. Thomas Child, under the title of "*Root Principles in Rational and Spiritual Things*" (H. R. Allenson, 1905) drew from Prof. Alfred Russell Wallace the warmest encomiums. In a letter to a correspondent, who had called his attention to the book, he wrote:

"I have read so many books that attempt a solution of the deepest problems of the universe and fail that I always approach a new one without any expectation of enlightenment.

philosophical doctrines pervade the whole of his theological works, but they are set forth especially in *The Divine Love and Wisdom*, *The Divine Providence*, *The Arcana Cœlestia*, *The True Christian Religion*, *The Apocalypse Explained*, and *The Intercourse of the Soul and the Body*.

The fundamental principle of Swedenborg's philosophy is the substantial reality of spiritual things. Judging by appearances, we speak of the material world as real and substantial, but this is a fallacy of the senses. "Fallacy is an inversion of order, and is the judgment of the eye and not of the mind, or a conclusion drawn from the appearance of a thing, and not from its essence."<sup>1</sup> "Thought from the eye closes up the understanding, but thought from the understanding opens the eye."<sup>2</sup> Living in this phenomenal world we cannot help being misled by outward appearances; it is difficult to believe that the things that we see and handle are less real than those which are unseen, yet we may be brought to a rational conviction of this truth. "Appearances are the first things out of which the human mind forms its understanding, and these appearances the mind cannot shake off except by the investigation

of cause; and if the cause lies deep, the mind cannot investigate it unless it keep the understanding for a long time in spiritual light; but it cannot keep it long in that light on account of the natural light which continually draws it back."<sup>1</sup>

The great spiritual realities are love and wisdom. "The idea of men in general about Love and about Wisdom is as of something flying and floating in subtile air or ether; or as an exhalation from something of the kind; and scarcely anyone thinks that they are really and actually Substance and Form. . . . Nevertheless the truth is that love and wisdom are the real and actual substance and form which constitute the subject itself."<sup>2</sup> But love and wisdom in man are not self-derived; they are a reflection of the essential attributes of Deity Itself. "The Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom are Substance and Form in itself, thus Very Reality and the One Only Reality. . . . He who by some stretch of thought can keep in his mind, and comprehend Esse and Existere in itself, will certainly also follow and comprehend that it is the Very Reality, and the One Only Reality. Very Reality is said of that which alone *is*; and one only Reality of that from which every other thing is. Now because this Very and this One Only is Substance and Form, it follows that it is the very and the one only Substance and Form. Because this very substance and Form is Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, it follows that it is the very and one only Love, and the very and one only Wisdom; consequently, that it is the very and one only Essence, as well as the very and one only Life: for Love and Wisdom is Life."<sup>3</sup> (In ex-

"But I very soon found that I had at last in Mr Child met with a man who had thought deeply, who could reason logically, and, perhaps most important of all, could express his ideas in clear and forcible language, and arrange his whole essay in the form of a compact and continuous argument and illustration.

"In the form of a criticism of Haeckel, it expounds a new and very remarkable view of all the great ideas and principles which underlie the universe of man.

"So far as I know, it is the most complete and satisfactory theory of the nature of matter and of mind, of force and life, of spirit, immortality, and freedom, that has yet been given to the world."

<sup>1</sup> *Apocalypse Explained*, No. 1215.

<sup>2</sup> *Divine Love and Wisdom*, No. 46.

<sup>1</sup> *Divine Love and Wisdom*, No. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Nos. 44 and 45.



planation of the apparently ungrammatical character of the last sentence, it should be stated that, according to our author, "the Divine Love and Wisdom proceed from the Lord as one";<sup>1</sup> just as the heat and light of the sun are inseparably united.)

God being thus the One Only Substance, created things derive their being and nature from Him. The idea that the Almighty in the beginning created all things out of nothing is unphilosophical and childish. "From absolute nothing, nothing is made, or can be made. This is a self-evident truth. The universe, therefore, which is an image of God, and hence full of God, could be created only in God from God; for God is Esse itself, and that which is, must be from Esse. To create that which is from nothing which is not, is a mere contradiction."<sup>2</sup> "Everyone who thinks from clear reason sees that the universe was not created out of nothing, because he sees that it is impossible for anything to be made out of nothing; for nothing is nothing, and to make anything out of nothing is contradictory, and what is contradictory is against the light of truth, which is from the Divine Wisdom. . . . Everyone who thinks from clear reason sees also that all things have been created out of a substance which is substance in itself, for this is very Esse out of which all things that are, can exist: and because God alone is Substance in itself, and thence very Esse, it is evident that the existence of things is from no other source."<sup>3</sup>

Swedenborg is careful to guard himself from the charge of Pantheism, which, nevertheless, has been brought against him. In the same paragraph, he continues: "Many have seen this, because reason causes

it to be seen; but they have not dared to confirm it, fearing lest thus they might perhaps be brought to think that the created universe is God because from God, or that nature is from itself, and thus that the inmost of nature is called God. . . .

In what follows it will be seen that, although God has created the universe and all things of it from Himself, yet there is nothing at all in the created universe which is God." In another place, he says: "That which is created in God from God is not continuous from Him; for God is Esse in Itself, and in created things there is not any Esse in itself. If in created things there were any Esse in itself, this would be continuous from God, and that which is continuous from God is God. . . . Every created thing by virtue of this its origin is such in its nature that it is a recipient of God, not by continuity but by contiguity. Its conjunctivity is by contiguity, and not by continuity. It is conformable because it has been created in God from God; and because it has been thus created, it is an analogue, and by this conjunction it is as an image of God in a mirror."<sup>1</sup>

God, in His inmost essence is incomprehensible and unapproachable by either angels or men. To the former He manifests Himself as a spiritual sun, and this spiritual sun is the origin and centre of life in the spiritual world, in the same way as the sun of the solar system is the origin and centre of life on the physical plane.<sup>2</sup> From the

<sup>1</sup> *Divine Love and Wisdom*, Nos. 55 and 56.

<sup>2</sup> This might be taken to imply that God is impersonal; but, although He is thus objectively manifested to the angels, they are conscious also of intimate personal communion. The appearance of the heavenly sun is in accordance with the law that all the interior states and ideas of spiritual beings are reproduced in corresponding external objects. Thus, since the Lord is the source and centre of

<sup>1</sup> *Divine Providence*, No. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Divine Love and Wisdom*, No. 55.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* No. 283.

spiritual sun, "the first proceeding of the Divine Love and Divine Wisdom," emanate atmospheres which are the media of life to spiritual beings, and by influx and correspondence to the lower world also. These atmospheres are of diminishing intensity the farther they are removed from their origin, and give rise to several degrees of life, essentially distinguished from one another. There are three discrete degrees of spiritual life, corresponding to the three kingdoms of nature.

Creation proceeds from the spiritual sun, operating on the physical plane through the natural sun; that is, from spiritual forces acting through natural forces. We might say that the spiritual sun is the soul of the natural sun, which in itself has nothing of life; like all matter, it is dead and inert. Life and force are spiritual; matter is but a medium which enables them to exhibit themselves on the physical plane. "Creation itself can in no wise be ascribed to the sun of the natural world, but all to the sun of the spiritual world; because the sun of the natural world is wholly dead, but the sun of the spiritual world is alive; for it is the first proceeding of the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom; and what is dead does nothing whatever of itself, but is acted upon. Wherefore to ascribe to it anything of creation would be like ascribing the work of the artificer to the instrument with which the hands of the artificer operate." "The actuality of the natural sun is not from itself, but from the living force proceeding from the sun of the spiritual world."<sup>1</sup>

"Nothing in nature exists except from a spiritual principle and by it. . . . The reason why nothing exists

in nature but from a spiritual principle, is, because there cannot any thing be given, unless it has a soul, all that being called soul which is essence, for that which has not in itself an essence does not exist, for it is a nonentity, because there is no esse or being as the ground of its existence. Thus it is with nature; its essence from which it exists is the spiritual principle, because this has in itself the divine esse, and also the divine power of acting, creating, and forming."<sup>1</sup> "Nature and life are two distinct things; nature takes its beginning from the sun of this world, and life from the sun of heaven."<sup>2</sup> "There is not a hair or thread of wool on any beast, nor the smallest portion of a quill or feather upon any bird, nor of a fin or scale on any fish, which is not derived from the life of their soul, thus which is not from a spiritual principle clothed by the natural."<sup>3</sup> "The living thing disposes the dead dead thing in plastic obedience, and forms it for uses, which are its ends."<sup>4</sup>

Creation, according to Swedenborg, was not simply an initiatory act, but is in continual operation. The reproductive powers of animals and plants are not from any life that is in nature itself, but are simply the means of successive new creations. "It matters not that the continuations are affected by seeds, still it is the same creative force which produces."<sup>5</sup> "Seeds are impregnated by the most subtile substances, which cannot be from any but a spiritual origin."<sup>6</sup>

All life being thus derived from the spiritual world, and every material object having behind it a spiritual force, or soul, which produces and sustains it, it follows that spiritual and natural stand to each

their spiritual life, the Divine Love and Wisdom appear to be embodied in a magnificent heavenly luminary.

<sup>1</sup> *Divine Love and Wisdom*, No. 157.

<sup>1</sup> *Apocalypse Explained*, No. 1206.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 1207.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* No. 1199.

<sup>4</sup> *Divine Love and Wisdom*, No. 166.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* No. 1209.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* No. 310.



other as cause and effect, and that there is a constant and intimate relation between the two. This is the basis of Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences. The natural world is an image or mirror of the spiritual world, every object, fact, and phenomenon, representing some immaterial idea which is its spiritual counterpart. We shall deal further with this doctrine when we come to speak of Swedenborg's expository works, for it is the foundation of his system of biblical exegesis.

Spiritual life is not monotonous and uniform in character, but presents as great variety as life on the physical plane. If the latter is derived from the former, it follows that there must be a corresponding order and arrangement in the manifestations on both planes. The Divine life, as it descends through the spiritual world, is received according to the state and capacity of the subject, and thus presents infinite variety. Broadly, there are three great classes of minds that embrace and manifest the Divine influences according to their kind; these three classes correspond with the three kingdoms of nature, and in the other life form three distinct heavens, with three corresponding hells. Within these degrees there are as many varied types as there are of animals, plants and minerals in the three kingdoms of nature.

The doctrine of degrees is one of a far-reaching character, and is peculiar to Swedenborg among modern philosophers and thinkers. Degrees, he tells us, are of two kinds, discrete and continuous. Discrete degrees are distinct orders of life or capacity, like the three kingdoms of nature; and are related to each other by correspondence. Continuous degrees are varieties of the same order of life, natural or spiritual; and may be illustrated by the classification of animals, plants and minerals

into genera and species. In each kingdom of nature the various forms are connected in a continuous series; but, broadly speaking, the three kingdoms are only related to each other by analogy. The correspondence which we have seen to exist between natural and spiritual things will enable us to understand the degrees that mark the development of man's mental and moral nature. The human mind is not the simple instrument that it is sometimes thought to be, but exhibits a marked trinal division both in its moral and intellectual aspects. Truth may be apprehended in three different ways: by the learning of facts or doctrines; by the process of reasoning; or by intuitive perception: and these three different modes of apprehension are characteristic of the three degrees of the mind, which are the scientific, or the faculty of memory; the rational, or cogitative; and the intellectual, or intuitive faculty. To these three mental degrees belong three corresponding classes of moral qualities. There are good deeds which are done from a sense of duty, in a spirit of simple obedience; others in which the doer acts from principle or a conviction of what is right; and others, again, which are prompted by feelings of love, kindness, or generosity.

Such is a simple outline of this doctrine, but it has modifications and ramifications that make it somewhat difficult of apprehension in a fuller statement. Swedenborg's terms, also, are likely to be confusing to those who have not attained a grasp of the subject. The term "spiritual," for example, is sometimes employed to differentiate the region of the mind that apprehends religious ideas from that which takes cognisance of physical truth; and sometimes in a more particular sense, to indicate the middle degree of the higher consciousness. Speak-



ing in the most general sense, the three degrees of the human mind are described as the natural, the rational, and the spiritual; but the spiritual is again divided into spiritual-natural, spiritual, and celestial, expressing three different modes of apprehending higher truths, — knowledge, intelligence, and intuition. In fact, there are wheels within wheels, and ordinary terms are hardly adequate to express the subtleties of the doctrine. When a clear conception of it has been formed, however, it is seen to be full of philosophic suggestion.

To return to the subject of Creation, Swedenborg does not favour the idea that new forms of life are developed merely by accidental variation, change of environment, or natural selection, or by all of these together. New forms indicate new characteristics, and hence new spiritual causes. Development is spiritual in the first instance; external influences are, at best, but secondary causes. "For the dead thing to act upon the living thing, or for the dead force to act upon the living force, or, what is the same, for the natural to act upon the spiritual, is entirely contrary to order, and therefore to think that it does so is contrary to the light of sound reason. The dead thing, the natural thing, may indeed in many ways be perverted or changed by external accidents, but still it cannot act upon life; but life acts into it, according to any change of form which has been induced."<sup>1</sup> "The spiritual principle acts into the natural and thereby produces its effects, as the principal cause by its instrumental cause."<sup>2</sup> The gradual evolution of the higher from the lower, therefore, apart from spiritual influx, is impossible.

Swedenborg has important ob-

servations on instinct and reason, and the difference between animals and men. Materialistic considerations tend to show that there is no fundamental difference, but Swedenborg explains wherein the real distinction lies.

Instinct is not simply habit hereditarily transmitted, as materialists maintain, but is spiritual in origin. "There is some spiritual principle which leads in all such cases."<sup>1</sup> The life of animals, as of man, is from the spiritual world, and thence, also, their instincts are derived.

The difference between men and animals, and the reason only the former are heirs of immortality, is expounded in the following passage, which for clearness and cogency could not be paralleled from any other writer on the subject:—

"Man is spiritual and at the same time natural, whereas a beast is not spiritual but natural. Man is endowed with will and understanding, and his will is the receptacle of the heat of heaven, which is love, and his understanding is the receptacle of the light of heaven, which is wisdom; but a beast is not endowed with will and understanding, but instead of will has affection, and instead of understanding, science (*i.e.*, knowledge appertaining to its life). The will and understanding with man can act as one, and they can act not as one, for man can think as from his understanding, what is not of his will, for he can think what he does not will, and *vice versa*; but with a beast affection and science make one, and cannot be separated; for a beast knows what appertains to its affection, and is affected with what appertains to its science; and inasmuch as the two faculties, which are called science and affection, with a beast, cannot be separated, therefore a beast could not destroy the order of its

<sup>1</sup> *Divine Love and Wisdom*, No. 166.

<sup>2</sup> *Apocalypse Explained*, No. 1197.

<sup>1</sup> *Apocalypse Explained*, No. 1198.

life, and hence it is that it is born into all the science of its affection. But the case is otherwise with man; his two faculties of life, which are called understanding and will, can be separated, as was said above, therefore he could destroy the order of his life, by thinking contrary to his will, and willing contrary to his understanding, and hereby he also has destroyed it; hence it is that he is born into mere ignorance, that from it he may be introduced into order by sciences through the medium of the understanding. The order into which man was created, is to love God above all things and his neighbour as himself, and the state into which man has come since he destroyed that order, is to love himself above all things, and the world as himself. Whereas man has a spiritual mind, and this is above his natural mind, and his spiritual mind is capable of intuition into such things as appertain to heaven and the church and likewise to moral and civil laws, and these things have reference to truths and goods, which are called spiritual, moral, and civil, besides the natural things of the sciences, and to their opposites, which are falses and evils, therefore man can not only think analytically, and thence draw conclusions, but also receive influx through heaven from the Lord, and become intelligent and wise: this no beast is capable of, what it knows not being from any understanding, but from the science of affection, which is its soul. . . .

"Inasmuch as man has a spiritual mind, and at the same time a natural mind, and his spiritual mind is above his natural mind, and the spiritual mind is such that it is capable of the intuition and love of truths and goods in every degree, both conjointly with the natural mind and abstractedly from it, it follows that the interiors of man, appertaining

to each mind, can be elevated to the Lord by the Lord, and be conjoined to Him; hence it is that every man lives eternally. This is not the case with a beast, which does not enjoy any spiritual mind; but only a natural, hence its interiors, which are only of science and affection, cannot be elevated by the Lord, and conjoined to Him, wherefore a beast does not live after death. A beast is indeed led by a certain spiritual influx falling into its soul, but inasmuch as its spiritual principle cannot be elevated, it can only be determined downwards, and to regard such things as appertain to its affection, which have reference only to the things appertaining to nourishment, habitation, and propagation, and from the science of its affection to know them by means of sight, odour, and taste.

"Inasmuch as man, by virtue of his spiritual mind, has the capacity of thinking rationally, therefore he also has the faculty of speech, for to speak appertains to thought from the understanding, which can see truths in spiritual light; but a beast, which has not any thought from understanding, but only science from affection, is only able to utter sounds, and to vary the sound of its affection according to its appetites."<sup>1</sup>

Of the Divine omnipotence and man's free will, the origin of evil, and other subjects which have distracted the spiritual philosopher in every age, Swedenborg offers rational and adequate theories. There is no real conflict, he asserts, between omnipotence and free-will. While God is all-powerful, He does not operate arbitrarily, but by law; and it is part of the Divine law that man shall be a free agent in spiritual matters. He is held in equilibrium between the forces of good and of

<sup>1</sup> *Apocalypse Revealed*, No. 1202.

evil, and must make his choice between them. At the same time the ability and will to do good are from the Lord alone, though it is given to man to feel that they are from himself. All he can do, however, is to dispose his mind and heart to receive the Divine influences; for "it is God that worketh in [us] both to will and to do of His good pleasure."<sup>1</sup> The origin of evil is in man's free-will, which enables him to pervert the Divine blessings; all evil is the perversion of what was once "very good." These subjects have been alluded to in our last chapter, and are discussed at length in *The True Christian Religion*. It is impossible here to do more than refer to them; or to touch upon other interesting points.

Swedenborg's spiritual philosophy is so totally different from anything else of the kind, that the unaccustomed reader finds himself, as it were, in a strange land, and may depart again without having obtained so much as a glimpse of its beauties, sceptical even of their existence. Let him sojourn long enough to acquire the language and accustom his eyes to the new scenery, and he will surely be repaid. Dropping metaphor, the clear logical statement, and luminous exposition of deep matters, which he will find as he pursues his studies, can scarcely fail to win his assent to the author's assertion, that "now it is allowable to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith."<sup>2</sup>

\* The principles that Swedenborg has elucidated have a very wide bearing; they are applicable, indeed, to all the great subjects that have exercised the human mind from time immemorial. A new light is thrown upon all of these problems, and a new order is brought into the region of philosophic inquiry.

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *True Christian Religion*, No. 508.

## CHAPTER X

### EXPOSITORY WORKS

SWEDENBORG'S principal expository works are the *Arcana Cælestia*, the first theological work that he published; the *Apocalypse Explained*; and the *Apocalypse Revealed*. The ground covered by these only includes the Books of Genesis and Exodus, and the Revelation of St John; but incidentally they touch upon almost every part of Scripture. They are bulky treatises, the *Arcana* in the English translation filling twelve large octavo volumes, the *Apocalypse Explained*, six, and the *Apocalypse Revealed*, two. Besides these works he left some fragmentary notes, and a *Summary Exposition of the Prophets and Psalms*, which, however, he did not publish. The *Arcana Cælestia* and the *Apocalypse Revealed* were brought out by himself, but the other work on the Apocalypse, though written earlier, was never entirely completed, and not published until some years after his death. It was nearly being lost to the world altogether, a portion of the manuscript having narrowly escaped destruction by fire. This manuscript had, indeed, an adventurous history from the time it left the custody of the Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1783, until its return to its proper home there in 1842.

It is stated that Mr C. F. Norden-sköld obtained the loan of this and other manuscripts of Swedenborg's from the secretary of the Academy, and brought them to England with a view of publishing what he thought desirable. The papers came into the hands of Mr Henry Peckitt, who, in his enthusiasm for the new doctrines, undertook the whole cost of publishing the *Apocalypse Explained*. While the first volume was in the printer's hands, the manuscript of the second was being



prepared for the press by Mr Peckitt, when a disastrous fire destroyed his house, with the contents of his valuable library; and the precious manuscript was given up for lost. A fireman, however, had hastily thrown it into the street, where it was picked up by a neighbour. On regaining possession of it Mr Peckitt carried it to the meeting-room of the Theosophical Society (as the few disciples of Swedenborg then called themselves), and, throwing it on the table, burst into a flood of tears. When he had recovered his self-possession, he exclaimed: "There! the greatest treasure which I had in my house is preserved in safety; and for the sake of that, I willingly submit to my great loss."

On the death of Mr Peckitt, the custody of the manuscript passed to two of his friends, by whom the nature of the original trust does not appear to have been understood; for they subsequently sold it to Mrs Peckitt, and it remained in the Peckitt family until 1828, when it was handed over to the Swedenborg Society by Mr Henry Peckitt, Junior. When it was discovered that it really belonged to the Swedish Academy of Sciences, it, with other manuscripts that had been missing for many years, was returned to the Librarian. This action led to a very pleasing exchange of courtesies between the two bodies.

With this digression we may proceed to consider the contents of this and the other works mentioned above.

First, it may be well to say something about Swedenborg's general teachings respecting the Bible. He regards it in the strictest sense as a Divine revelation, though he does not accept all its histories or statements of fact as literally true. On the other hand, he tells us that the early chapters of Genesis are purely allegorical in character and do not describe the creation of the universe

and the early history of mankind, as commonly supposed. The Bible is truly the "Word of God," though its divinity does not reside in its outward form. Within the histories of individuals and nations, and in the gospels, prophecies and poetical books, is enshrined an interior spiritual sense; or, rather, are involved a series of meanings, one within the other, like the various unfoldings of a flower. "In its ultimate sense, the Word is natural; in its interior sense, spiritual; and in its inmost, celestial; and it is Divine in every sense."<sup>1</sup> It is, indeed, the Divine truth taking form as it descends from God through the heavens to the earth. "In its first origin the Word is purely Divine; when this passed through the Heavens of the Lord's Celestial Kingdom it became Divine Celestial, and when it passed through the Heavens of the Lord's Spiritual Kingdom it became Divine Spiritual, and when it came to man it became Divine Natural; hence it is that the natural sense of the Word contains within it the spiritual sense, and this the celestial sense, and this a sense purely Divine, which is not open to any man, nor even to any angel."<sup>2</sup> The spiritual sense can be comprehended by men in some degree, but the celestial sense "can scarcely be unfolded, for it does not fall so much into the thought of the understanding, as into the affection of the will."<sup>3</sup> It is adapted to the perception of the celestial angels, with whom the Divine law is received "in their inward parts," and written "in their hearts."

In thus asserting an occult meaning in the Scriptures, Swedenborg does not detract from the value of the literal sense: indeed, he raises it to a much higher degree

<sup>1</sup> *Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture*, No. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Apocalypse Revealed*, No. 959.

<sup>3</sup> *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, No. 19.

of esteem than is bestowed upon it by those who regard the literal sense as containing the sum-total of Divine revelation ; for he teaches that the books of the Bible are not mere human compositions but a veritable embodiment of the wisdom of God, adapted to the comprehension of the simplest minds. Everything needful for salvation, he tells us, is contained in the literal sense, and from the literal sense the doctrine of the Church should be derived and confirmed. In the literal sense, indeed, "the Word is in its fulness, its holiness, and its power." What need, then, to supplement this with a spiritual sense ? Because the natural sense is written according to appearances, and is often obscure and misleading ; and because the spiritual sense amplifies and emphasises the truth of the letter, while it explains the mysteries and apparent contradictions of the same.

In no part of the Bible is a knowledge of the spiritual sense more helpful than in dealing with the early chapters of Genesis. It is objected by sceptics that these contain false science and imaginary history, while they present an unworthy idea of God as an unjust, resentful and arbitrary Being. In the spiritual sense, however, all these difficulties disappear, and criticism is disarmed. As Bishop Colenso remarks : "Let it be once freely admitted that these stories of the first chapters of Genesis, whatever they may teach of Divine, Eternal Truth, and whatever lessons may be drawn from them by a devout mind, are in their present form and structure mythical descriptions, where their narrative is an imaginative clothing for ideas, and so are not to be regarded as teaching unquestionable matters of historical fact, which occurred in the primitive times ; and then such a comparison, as we must now make,

between the statements of the Bible and well-known facts of Science, would be superfluous and uncalled for." <sup>1</sup>

No better example of Swedenborg's exegetical method could be afforded than his explanation of these early chapters of Genesis. Truly he brings light into dark places. Instead of treating the opening chapter as an account of the beginning of created things, he takes us at once into spiritual regions and interprets it as descriptive of the new creation or regeneration of man. The unregenerate condition, when man is immersed in the things of sense and self and oblivious of his better nature, is typified by the dark and formless void, over which the spirit of God brooded to bring out of it order and life. The end and purpose of the spiritual creation, as of the physical, is the production of man, the image and likeness of God. The spiritual man is the human soul in which all the faculties are fully developed and duly subordinated, and which lives according to the divine laws. To attain to this state requires that the soul should pass through various stages of development, which process is represented by the six days of creation.

"The times and states of man's regeneration, in general and in particular, are divided into six, and are called the days of his creation : for by degrees he is elevated from a state in which he possesses none of the qualities which properly constitute a man, until by little and little he attains to the sixth day, in which he becomes an image of God." <sup>2</sup>

Briefly, the six states of man's regeneration are these. The first is a condition of darkness and vacuity ; for man is born in total ignorance of all that belongs to his spiritual life. In this state, however, divine influences are brought to bear, and

<sup>1</sup> *The Pentateuch*, etc., Part IV. p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Arcana Cœlestia*, No. 29.



the child, or the unregenerate soul, receives impressions which are stored up for future use. The creation of light, and the division of light from darkness, represent the first dawn of spiritual knowledge, and the recognition of the difference between the worldly and the heavenly life: such a state as Bunyan describes in *Christian*,<sup>1</sup> when he was first aroused to a sense of sin and the necessity for a change of life.

"The second state is when a division takes place between those things which are of the Lord, and such as are proper to man. . . . Thus the things which belong to the external man are separated from those belonging to the internal."<sup>1</sup> (The term *earth*, throughout the Bible, has reference to the external man or degree of life, and *heaven* to the internal man or spiritual degree.)<sup>2</sup> "The third state is that of repentance, in which the regenerating subject, from the internal man, begins to discourse piously and devoutly, and to do good actions, like works of charity, but which nevertheless are inanimate, because they are supposed to originate in himself. These good actions are called tender grass, and also the herb yielding seed, and afterwards the tree bearing fruit."<sup>2</sup>

The gathering together of the waters represents the storing up of spiritual knowledge. Water in its various forms is an apt emblem of truth. The sea, or ocean, the great reservoir of the waters of the earth, stand for the memory which is the omnivorous receptacle of knowledge of all kinds; a storehouse upon which the intellectual faculties constantly draw to stimulate the growth of ideas, which, with the practical uses that result from them, are the spiritual counterparts of the various forms of vegetable life.

In the fourth state the life is ruled by the great principles of love and faith, represented by the sun and the moon. The stars are particular knowledges of spiritual truth which serve to guide the life when the greater lights are obscured. In this stage of the regenerating soul, the indefinite ideas of the earlier states have given place to clear and distinct conceptions of truth and duty.

The correspondence of the heavenly bodies to the guiding principles of the higher life is almost self-evident. The sun is constantly used in the Bible as a type of the Lord, especially as to the Divine love, and by the poets of any powerful controlling influence. The moon, receiving her light from the sun, and shining upon the world when the rays of the latter are withdrawn, is a fitting representative of faith, which cheers and illuminates the night-time of the soul. The stars, although they give little light, by their fixity of position serve to guide the mariner or wayfarer. We have guiding stars to direct us on our heavenward road also.

The fifth day of creation was marked by the production of fish and birds; while the creation of the higher mammals is assigned to the sixth.

"After the great luminaries are kindled and placed in the internal man, and the external thence receives light, then the regenerating person begins first to live. Heretofore he can scarcely be said to have lived, inasmuch as the good which he did was supposed by him to have been done of himself, and the truth which he spake to have been spoken of himself; and since man of himself is dead, and there is in him nothing but what is evil and false, therefore whatsoever he produces from himself is not alive, in consequence of his inability to do good which is good in itself. . . . Now that he is vivified by love and faith,

<sup>1</sup> *Arcana Cœlestia*, No. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 9.



and believes that the Lord operates all the good which he does and all the truth which he speaks, he is compared to the *creeping things of the water*, and to the *fowls which fly above the earth*, and also to *beasts*, which are all animate things, and are called *living souls*.”<sup>1</sup>

Fish and birds represent a comparatively low grade of spiritual life, in which faith is the predominating element; the higher animals typify the life in which love is more active. Man, the crown and epitome of the whole creation, stands for the regenerated soul, perfect in its degree, as reflecting the image and likeness of the Creator, and exercising dominion over its own powers and capacities (the lower animals) by God-given strength and authority.

This is a very brief statement of the spiritual meaning of the Creation, as explained by Swedenborg. We may take a broader view of the subject, also. All that is here applied to the individual man, applies equally to man in a corporate sense. The days of creation not only speak of the regeneration of the individual soul; they have an interior historical meaning, also, which describes the formation of the human principle in the race. Swedenborg states, and science confirms his assertion, that mankind in primitive times were little distinguished from the brute animals; the spiritual principle which now differentiates them was implanted gradually, during successive generations; and this development of the higher nature is also shadowed forth in the account of the creation of the world given in the first two chapters of Genesis.

The work of creation finished, we are told that God rested from His work on the seventh day. To accept the statement literally is to derogate from the omnipotence of God. How could the Almighty,

from whom all things proceed and upon whom they momentarily depend, be exhausted by the exertions of six days' labour? The idea is childish. God is said to rest when man's life has been brought into harmony with the Divine life. There is no longer opposition or conflict. Although it is for each individual to work out his own salvation, the truth is that every effort towards righteousness is the Lord's work. "It is God who worketh in [us] both to will and to do of His good pleasure."<sup>1</sup> When this work is over, and the man no longer resists the Divine will, the Sabbath state has been reached in which both God and man enter into their rest.

The Sabbath state of the race is represented by the Garden of Eden. Creation being finished, and everything having been declared to be "very good," we are told that "the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed." There has been much speculation as to the probable site of this garden, but all such speculation is futile. It is a "garden of the soul" and not any material paradise that is described. Under a variety of beautiful symbols the happy condition of mankind is depicted when they followed the appointed order of their lives, and delighted to do the Divine will. It was a childlike condition of absolute dependence on God, but one not destined to last, as the sequel of the story shows.

We are given to understand that everything in Eden was good: the trees were "pleasant to the sight and good for food," and the animals were gentle and harmless. Yet one tree and one animal appear to have been evil; the tree of knowledge of good and evil was forbidden to be even touched, and the wiles of the serpent were the cause of the trans-

<sup>1</sup> *Arcana Cælestia*, No. 39.

<sup>1</sup> *Phil.* ii. 13.

gression of this commandment. What do these things mean ?

The temptation of Eve, and through her of Adam, was not the work of a crafty reptile temporarily endowed with speech, but was of the nature of all human temptations. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man ; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."<sup>1</sup> The serpent is but a type of this lust, —of the lower, sensual nature that delights to grovel on the earth, and which, if listened to (this serpent can talk very seductively), inevitably leads to a fall from virtue.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil, again, was no earthly tree, but represents more worldly knowledge and the impressions of the senses. This kind of food is dangerous to the higher life of man. "It is allowable to obtain a knowledge of what is true and good by means of every perception derived from the Lord [the trees of the Garden], but not from self and the world, or to inquire into the mysteries of faith by the senses or from science, for in this case the celestial principle is destroyed";<sup>2</sup> in other words, Paradise is lost.

Everything in this story being symbolical, it follows that Adam and Eve are not to be regarded as two individuals : they are representatives of the race, or of human nature in the abstract, Adam standing for its intellectual and Eve for its moral side. We can see now why the woman was first tempted, and through her the man : it is desire that leads a man astray and warps the judgment to its wishes. Man's desire for independence led him to trust in his own self-derived intelligence, rather than to the Divine guidance, represented by the

tree of life. After the fall, access to the tree of life was denied to him : not that the highest blessings were arbitrarily withheld, but man's own actions rendered him incapable of receiving them.

Among other misconceptions that have arisen from putting a literal interpretation on these parabolic stories is the idea that the need to labour for one's daily bread was a curse pronounced upon the first man for his disobedience. Work, the source of the truest satisfaction, the greatest blessing in life next to love, a curse of the good God ! None but an idler by nature could really entertain such a thought. Even the Eden condition was not one of ease and idleness ; the man was placed in the garden "to dress it and to keep it." What, then, is the meaning of the curse ? First, let us premise that God never curses ; the solemn malediction pronounced is but a truthful statement of the condition to which man had reduced himself by his rebellious action. The blasted ground is the human heart, which was no longer "an honest and good heart" that brought forth abundantly, but one filled with thorns and thistles that choked the Word and rendered it unfruitful. Such, alas ! is its state with most of us at this day ; though the will to do good may be ours, evil is ever present to resist and thwart our endeavours, so that any progress in the spiritual life is through much toil and struggling. Truly, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."<sup>1</sup>

The history of Cain and Abel, again, presents many difficulties, if we regard it as describing actual occurrences. We cannot help feeling that the treatment of Cain prior to his fratricidal act was not altogether just : he offered what he had to the Lord, yet he was rejected and his brother preferred. In the spiritual

<sup>1</sup> James i. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Arcana Cœlestia*, No. 126.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 12.

sense this inequality does not appear; we see Cain as the representative of merely intellectual faith apart from charity (the fruits of the earth, as we have seen, stand for things of the intellect); while Abel typifies love or charity, and his offering, the worship that springs from the good affections of the heart (the "firstlings of his flock"). Where mere faith and formalism prevail, love is slain.

The story of the Flood has given occasion for much animadversion to the rationalist; but when interpreted spiritually, all his objections vanish. It is not a physical deluge that we have to consider, but a flood of monstrous evils and falsities that overwhelmed the Church in ancient times. Noah and his family represent those who had not succumbed to the prevailing heresies and immoralities; a "little remnant," in fact, such as is found in all times of spiritual decadence, among whom a revival of religion takes place. These were supported in the midst of the general demoralisation by adherence to true doctrine and godly life. (Noah, we are told, was "a preacher of righteousness.") Right principles or doctrines form the spiritual ark, which bears us up when the floods of iniquity threaten to overwhelm us.

Literalism sees in the account of the tower of Babel another instance of Divine judgment, and the origin of the diversity of language. We know now that the many tongues by which men convey their thoughts to one another did not originate in this way, but by gradual evolution from the earliest forms of speech. Therefore, if the story of Babel has any ground of truth, it must be read in some other than the verbal sense. It really tells us of the efforts of evil and misguided men to circumvent the Divine order of life and climb up to heaven some other way. The

tower of Babel is a citadel of false doctrine, having the brick of man-made schemes of salvation, and the fiery bitumen of unholy passions, for the solid stone of Divine truth, and the firm-set mortar of uniting love.

Up to the time of Abraham, the Biblical account consists of myths or pseudo-history: afterwards there is an evident basis of historical truth; but the events are so selected and recorded as to convey a continuous spiritual meaning. The history of the patriarchs, of the sojourning of the Israelites in Egypt, their miraculous deliverance, their wanderings in the wilderness, and their final settlement in the promised land, convey deep, spiritual lessons for all times and peoples. Not only this, but in their inmost sense they have reference to the great work which the Saviour accomplished in the glorification of His human nature during His life upon earth. We cannot here give even a hint of these things.

Swedenborg's explanation of the Book of the Revelation is consistent with his *Arcana Cœlestia*, inasmuch as it is based upon the same "science of correspondences." The same types occur, in some cases, in the Book of Genesis as in the Apocalypse, and have the same meanings assigned to them. In the light of the spiritual sense, the apparently heterogeneous mass of symbols becomes a connected account of spiritual events.

"Many," writes Swedenborg, "have expounded this prophetic book which is called the Apocalypse; but having all been unacquainted with the internal or spiritual sense of the Word, they have applied the various particulars of its contents to the successive states of the church, with which they have become acquainted from history; besides which, they have applied many of them to the concerns of civil governments. Hence it is that those expositions are for the most part con-



jectures, which never can appear in such a light as would admit of their being established as truths; wherefore, as soon as they are read, they are laid aside among other matters of mere opinion. . . . All things which are written in the Apocalypse are expressed in a style similar to that in which the prophetic parts of the Old Testament are written, and in general, in which the whole Word is written, and the Word in the letter is natural, but in its inward contents it is spiritual, and being such, it contains a sense within it which does not at all appear in the letter.”<sup>1</sup>

What, then, does the spiritual sense discover to us?

The book opens with the description of a wonderful vision of the glorified Saviour, as seen by the aged apostle. We cannot accept this as a picture of the actual person of Deity, but rather as a comprehensive emblem of the Divine perfections. The head of dazzling whiteness, the feet like glowing brass, the covering garment, the golden girdle, the sword proceeding from His mouth, and the seven stars in His right hand, all have a definite signification and shadow forth some quality of Divinity, or some form of Divine activity.

The seven Churches are not seven particular Christian organisations, though the apostle's message may have been addressed to such at first, but stand for all classes of those who receive the Gospel. Their various delinquencies describe the different forms of heresy and evil that have wrought corruption in the Church; for the Apocalypse is the book of judgment of the first Christian dispensation. A great part of it is taken up with particulars of this judgment, which Swedenborg declares, as we have stated above, was accomplished in the spiritual world in the year 1757.

<sup>1</sup> *Apocalypse Explained*, No. 1.

Protestant theologians are agreed in regarding Babylon as a type of the perverted Romish church, and Swedenborg confirms their opinion. The judgment pronounced upon Babylon, however, is not alone upon a particular section of the corrupted Church, but upon all who pervert the truths of religion for the sake of gaining dominion over others. There are many such outside the Roman communion, but the subjection of the laity to the priesthood, and the assumption of almost Divine powers by the latter, are such striking characteristics of the Romish system, that they cannot be overlooked.

Protestant heresies are equally condemned in the Book of the Revelation. The great red dragon stands for the immoral doctrine of salvation by faith alone, which, as destructive of all spiritual enlightenment, is represented by the dragon drawing down the stars with his tail. This dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth to a child, that he might devour it as soon as born. Women in general correspond to affection, and the woman here represents those in the decadent church who still retain a love of what is good and true, among whom a new church will arise. The spiritual dragon vehemently opposes the pure doctrine of this new church, symbolised by the man-child.

The triumph of the good and true, and the inauguration of a new dispensation, are set forth in the marvellous vision of the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending from God out of heaven. Cities in the Bible, always represent systems of doctrine, true or false. As the great city, Babylon, typifies the corrupt system of the Romish Church, so, the New Jerusalem describes in vivid symbols the beauty and consistency of the doctrines of the renovated Church. The foundations of precious stones are the great fundamental

principles of religion, full of light and beauty; the wall great and high, truths that protect from the assaults of evil; the gates of pearl are introductory truths, like the two great commandments, that lead the soul to the heavenly state, represented by the golden streets of the holy city; the river of the water of life flowing from the throne through the street of the city, the continual influx of living truth from the Lord; and so with all the other objects described; each has its appropriate signification.

Stated in this brief and bare manner, it may seem to the reader that the interpretation of these Divine symbols is arbitrary and inconclusive; but further study will satisfy him that it is based upon a reliable system. It would be easy to show, for instance, that stone throughout the Scriptures stands for truth, especially the hard facts of knowledge. Recognising this correspondence, we can see why the Israelites were commanded to build altars of unhewn stones (*i.e.* to offer worship from unsophisticated truth); why the tower of Babel was built of brick instead of stone; how David vanquished the Philistine giant by means of a smooth stone from the brook; and can understand the meaning of the stone that destroyed the composite image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream; of the "head stone of the corner"; of the rock upon which the wise man built his house; and of the other rock (the declaration by Peter of Christ's Divinity), upon which the true Church is founded.

Space will not permit of further elaboration of the subject, but what has been written will serve to give a general idea of Swedenborg's system of exegesis. The reader will probably admit that his method is ingenious and the result interesting; but if he once grasps the great

principle of correspondence, upon which the spiritual interpretation of Scripture is based, he will come to see that the method is also true and the result inevitable: that, in fact, Swedenborg has not given us an ingenious system, but revealed to us an unalterable law, under which "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER XI

### "THINGS HEARD AND SEEN"

IF Swedenborg really enjoyed the privilege of constant association with angels and spirits, as he asserts, we should expect to find evidence of the fact in his works. These should give us new light on spiritual subjects, and positive information in regard to the life to come. As to the new light which Swedenborg has thrown upon theological and philosophical problems, the reader may form some opinion from a perusal of the last three chapters: in this one we propose to deal chiefly with his revelations of "other-world order."

When we compare the generous and enlightened views in relation to the other life, which are largely held by intelligent people at the present day, with the grossly material and morally revolting ideas of the popular theology of the eighteenth century, we cannot but feel that a distinct advance in spiritual knowledge has been made. To the influence of Swedenborg this change must be largely, if not entirely, attributed. At a time when men believed,—if they believed at all in a future life,—in the resurrection of the material body; in the arbitrary character of Divine rewards and punishments, and the vindictiveness of the latter; that heavenly joys

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 20.

consisted in perpetual adoration and psalm-singing; that the lost were tortured for ever in material fire and brimstone; and that among the lost were all the heathen who had never heard of Christ, and millions of unbaptised or non-elect infants—Swedenborg taught the spiritual nature of the resurrection, and the continuity of the life beyond the grave with the present state of existence; the universality of the Divine benignity, reaching even to the lowest hell; the automatic character of future rewards and punishments; that the spiritual life is a life of activity and usefulness, even with the infernals; that the fire of hell is nothing but the burning of evil lusts; and that the heathen have as good a chance of salvation as professing Christians, if they live up to the light that they possess; in short, that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all His works, and that His loving-kindness is shown, as the psalmist declares,<sup>1</sup> in His rendering to every man according to his works.

Men in all ages have desired to know the fate of their departed friends,—what their state and condition is; how they are occupied; if they still enjoy any kind of intercourse with the friends from whom they have been sundered by death; and if the latter may look forward to a renewal of the old intimacies, when they themselves are translated to the upper world; but the veil has hitherto been closely drawn. Are we to assume that it must ever remain so? Are there not circumstances in our own times that seem to point to the necessity of some further revelation to prevent the extinction of faith? On the one hand we have a growing agnosticism, and on the other the eager craving of those who still cling to the old beliefs for more light on the subject of the future life. Swedenborg states

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxii. 12.

that he was admitted beyond the veil and instructed in the order of the spiritual world, with the object that men's faith might be sustained, and might rest upon a sure foundation. Spiritists also maintain that they have learnt much from their intercourse with the departed; and their fragmentary teachings, so far as they have any value, confirm the more explicit statements of our author. Let us hear what he says, then, without prejudice. We have the fullest information in his work on *Heaven and Hell*,<sup>1</sup> but additional particulars will be found in the chapters interspersed between the expository portions of the *Arcana Cœlestia*, in *Conjugal Love*, and incidentally in other works. In the introduction to *Heaven and Hell*, he writes:

"The arcana which are revealed in the following pages, are concerning heaven and hell, and also concerning the life after death. The man of the church has scarcely any knowledge concerning heaven and hell, or concerning his life after death, although they all stand plainly described in the Word; indeed, many who are born within the church deny these things, and say in their hearts, 'Who has ever come thence to tell us?' Lest, therefore, such a negative principle, which prevails especially amongst those who have acquired much worldly wisdom, should also infect and corrupt the simple in heart, and the simple in faith, it has been permitted me for thirteen years to associate with angels, and to converse with them as one man with another; and to see the things which are in the heavens, as well as those which are in the hells; and to describe them from experience, in the hope that ignorance may be lightened, and incredulity dissipated."

The first great principle, of the

<sup>1</sup> Its full title is, *Heaven and Hell; or, also the Intermediate State, or World of Spirits: A Relation of Things Heard and Seen.*



continuity of existence, is stated in the very earliest words that Swedenborg published on the nature of the other life. In *Arcana Cælestia* (No. 70) we read :

“That I might know that man lives after death, it has been granted me to speak and converse with several persons with whom I had been acquainted during their life in the body, and this not merely for a day or a week, but for months, and in some instances for nearly a year, as I had been used to do here on earth. They were greatly surprised that they themselves, during their life in the body, had lived, and that many others still live, in such a state of unbelief concerning a future life, when nevertheless there intervenes but the space of a few days between the decease of the body and their entrance into another world,—for death is a continuation of life.”

Then follows a description of what happens during those few days, based not only upon the information of others but upon his own experience ; for, he tells us, he was let into a condition of bodily insensibility that he might undergo precisely similar states to those of dying persons. The dying, he tells us, are attended during the solemn passage from one world to another by heavenly as well as earthly watchers. Angels from the celestial, or highest, heaven minister first to the passing soul, and keep the mind as far as possible in the pious and holy thoughts which are usually associated with the death-bed. The subject is at this time semi-conscious, and scarcely notices the presence of his angelic ministrants ; who themselves are silent, and communicate their thoughts by a subtle influence.

It is a law of spiritual life that persons of diverse nature cannot remain associated together for long ; it follows that such as have not reached the celestial degree of de-

velopment, find the presence of the holy ones who first approach them unendurable after a time ; so these retire and give place to spiritual angels. It is the office of the spiritual angels to introduce the novitiate spirit into conscious life, to open his eyes, in fact, to the new world which he has entered ; for hitherto, he has lain in a trancelike condition and seen nothing.

The spiritual angels remain with man so long as their presence is congenial to him, instructing him in divine knowledge and introducing him to the wonderful scenes of his new stage of existence. They, in turn, retire if their presence is shown to be distasteful.

“When the soul thus separates himself, he is received by good spirits, who likewise do him all kind offices whilst he is in consort with them. If, however, his life in the world was such that he cannot remain associated with the good, he seeks to be disunited from them also, and this separation is repeated again and again, until he associates himself with those whose state entirely agrees with that of his former life in the world, among whom he finds, as it were, his own life. They then, wonderful to relate, live together a life of similar quality to that which had constituted their ruling delight when in the body. On returning into this life, which appears to them as a new commencement of existence, some after a longer and others after a shorter space of time are carried thence towards hell ; whilst such as have been principled in faith towards the Lord, are led by degrees from this new beginning of life to heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, at the very threshold of his new state of existence the man becomes his own judge, and chooses his own associates. It is an inspiring thought, and one that gives us an

<sup>1</sup> *Arcana Cælestia*, No. 316.

overwhelming idea of the Divine benignity, that everyone, high or humble, saint or sinner, is offered an opportunity of entering the very loftiest sphere of heavenly society, and, when this is rejected, is shown one by one all the glories of the kingdom and invited to choose his own place and share in the same.

When the novitiate has fully entered into spiritual consciousness and returned into his own proper mode of life, he is surprised to find that the new world is little different from the one he has just left ; so little, indeed, that many refuse to believe that they have died at all. They find themselves possessed of bodily organs similar to those which they had in the world, they meet congenial companions, and see around them objects not unlike those which they had been accustomed to in their earthly life. They enjoy, in fact, a real substantial existence, instead of living in the disembodied condition that they probably anticipated before they entered their new stage of life.

Swedenborg was the first to teach that spirits have substantial, organised forms and perfect sensation. He says :

" Care should be taken not to give credence to the erroneous opinion that spirits do not possess far more exquisite sensations than during the life of the body, for I have been convinced to the contrary by experience repeated thousands of times. . . . Spirits not only possess the faculty of sight, and live in a light to which, with good spirits, angelic spirits, and angels, the midday light of this world cannot be compared. . . . They enjoy the power of hearing also, and that in so exquisite a degree as vastly to exceed what they possessed in the body ; of which, in my almost constant conversations with them, now for some years, I have had repeated opportunity of being con-

vinced. The nature of their speech, and the sense of smell they also possess, will, by the divine mercy of the Lord, be considered hereafter. They have, besides, a most exquisite sense of touch, whence come the pains and torments endured in hell ; for all sensations have relation to the touch, of which they are merely diversities and varieties. Their desires and affections, moreover, are incomparably stronger than those possessed during the life of the body. . . . Men think, also, after death, far more perspicuously and distinctly than during their previous life ; for in a spiritual state of being, more is involved in one idea than in a thousand whilst in the natural life. . . . In a word, man loses nothing by death, but is still a man in all respects, although more perfect than when in the body." <sup>1</sup>

Not only does man take with him all his powers and capacities, but also his acquired modes of thought, his beliefs, and his prejudices. Hence many arrive in the new life with gross misconceptions as to the nature of the happiness of heaven, which they desire to enjoy ; and these erroneous ideas have to be corrected. This is done in the most effective and thorough way, by allowing them to test experimentally their own ideals of bliss. In the introduction to *Conjugal Love*, we have a most interesting description of such experiences, which is repeated in the *True Christian Religion* (Nos. 731-752). We are told of spirits who had looked forward to constant social intercourse with the wisest and best as the sum of happiness, and who were therefore placed in a mansion where they might meet with such ; but in a few days they became weary of talk and begged to be let out, which was permitted after they had been instructed as to the true nature of heavenly joy. Others

<sup>1</sup> *Arcana Cælestia*, No. 322.

sought satisfaction in feasting with the patriarchs and apostles, and were granted the semblance of such delight, but were quickly sated. Others again, and these were doubtless a large class, had learnt to regard heaven as a place of perpetual worship, "where congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths have no end." Such were permitted to enter a temple and join in the worship there proceeding. At first they were in ecstasies; but after a long period of devotion their fervour began to wane,—some nodded and slept, others yawned, or cried out to be released, and all were wearied with excess of pious effort. Those who had looked forward to the enjoyment of heavenly dignities, were permitted to assume such, but found no lasting satisfaction in them. All were instructed that heavenly joy "is the delight of doing something that is of use to oneself and others; and the delight of use derives its essence from love and its existence from wisdom. The delight of use, originating in love through wisdom, is the soul and life of all heavenly joys." "To those who do uses faithfully, He gives the love of use, and its reward, which is internal blessedness; and this is eternal happiness." But is not the "chief end of man" to "glorify God and enjoy him for ever"? Truly! The glorification of God, however, is something more than psalm-singing. "It means bringing forth the fruits of love, that is, doing the work of one's function faithfully, sincerely, and diligently, for this is of the love of God, and of the love of the neighbour; and this is the bond of society, and its good. Thereby God is glorified,"<sup>1</sup> on earth and in heaven.

It need scarcely be said that such experiences do not take place either in heaven or in hell, but in an intermediate state, where souls are prepared for their final abodes. At the

time when Swedenborg wrote, the doctrine of an intermediate condition had been utterly eliminated from Protestant theology; it was a bold thing, therefore, for him to propound it, especially as he thereby laid himself open to the charge of restoring the false notion of purgatory. With Swedenborg, however, the intermediate state is not a place where those who have neglected the means of salvation on earth may have a second chance; but the theatre of judgment, where the true character of the man is brought to light. The method of this judgment is not that of a criminal court, in which the accused is arraigned before judge or magistrate, and witnesses are called on either side. Here the man is his own judge and his own witness: his scroll of life is unrolled before him, and all his states and experiences recalled; the good that he has done from the love of goodness is confirmed as his own, while works done for the sake of merit or applause are cast aside as dross; evil that has been done and repented of is again brought to mind, to be spurned and blotted out, if repentance has been genuine; while misdeeds that have been done from the love of evil are recalled with a sense of delight and become confirmed as part of his nature. The truth that men have learned is also confirmed to them if they have made it their own by obedience; while those whose knowledge and profession of truth have only been a cloak to an evil life, have taken from them that wisdom which was theirs only in seeming. Such as have never been instructed in true doctrine, or who have imbibed error unconsciously, have opportunities afforded them of acquiring the truth of which they are deficient. The heathen, and other ignorant persons of good disposition, are carefully instructed in such degree of truth as they are able to receive, and thus

<sup>1</sup> *Conjugal Love*, No. 9.



prepared to enter the abodes of angels. All infants, it should be said, whether baptised or unbaptised, Christian or heathen, are received directly into heaven, and educated by the angels.

From the above statement, Swedenborg's remark will be understood, that "the Lord casts no one into hell";<sup>1</sup> the wicked, however, naturally gravitate thither, as there only do they find congenial associations. Not only are none sent to hell, but none need remain there who wish to leave. We are told that evil spirits are sometimes granted their desire to enter heaven, but they immediately cast themselves down headlong, unable to endure its atmosphere of purity. Another striking statement of Swedenborg's is that men are not punished for their misdeeds done in the body, but only for continuance in ill-doing. Nor are they punished for evil done with good, though mistaken, intention, such as fanatical persecution of others; still less for hereditary evil.

There is nothing vindictive in Divine punishment; indeed, as we have said, there is no such thing, really, as *Divine* punishment; the appearance is due to the evil setting themselves against the true order of their life. "Such is the equilibrium of all and every thing in another life that evil punishes itself, so that in evil is the punishment of evil. It is similar in respect to the false, which returns upon him who is principled therein, hence everyone brings punishment and torment on himself. . . . The Lord never sends anyone into hell, but is desirous to bring all out of hell; still less does he induce torment; but since the evil spirit rushes into it himself, the Lord turns all punishment and torment to some good and use."<sup>2</sup> Thus

there is mercy even in punishment. "The mercy of the Lord involves all and every thing done by the Lord towards mankind, who are in such a state that the Lord pities them, and each one according to his state; thus He pities the state of him whom He permits to be punished, and pities him also to whom He grants the enjoyment of good; it is of mercy to be punished, because mercy turns all the evil of punishment into good; and it is of mercy to grant the enjoyment of good, because no one merits anything that is good."<sup>1</sup> The Lord also provides for the mitigation of the sufferings of those who by their own acts have brought punishment upon themselves. "When the wicked endure punishment, there are always angels present to regulate its degree, and alleviate the pains of the sufferers as much as may be."<sup>2</sup> The common idea that punishment in hell is continuous and incessant is a mistaken one. The evil are only punished when they transgress the bounds by which they are restrained, for the sake of outward order, and seek to do injury to others. "The wicked run into the punishment of their evil; but only when their evil has reached its height. Every evil has its limit, though it is different in each individual: this limit it is not allowed them to pass; and when a wicked person does pass it, he brings himself into punishment."<sup>3</sup> By this means the devils in hell are prevented from rushing into greater depths of wickedness; "for it is a law there that no one must become worse than he had been in the world."<sup>4</sup>

Both heaven and hell are ruled by the strictest principles of Divine order. The government of heaven is the natural outcome of the spirit of order that reigns within all: in

<sup>1</sup> *Heaven and Hell*, No. 545.

<sup>2</sup> *Arcana Cælestia*, No. 696.

<sup>1</sup> *Arcana Cælestia*, No. 587.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 967. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* No. 1857.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* No. 6599.

hell there is necessary coercion and restraint, though liberty is granted so far as it is not abused.

Heaven is divided broadly into three divisions, corresponding to the three degrees of the human mind, the celestial, the spiritual, and the natural; and in each of these heavens there is a further classification into societies, according to the specific characteristics of the inhabitants. There is a triple division also in the hells, and a similar subdivision into infernal communities. In the heavenly societies there is subordination of one to another; there are rulers and leaders and teachers: but there is nothing of the love of place and power that marks earthly governments. Greatness in heaven is pre-eminence in use.

So strictly are individuals and societies subordinated to the general welfare, and so harmoniously related, that the whole of heaven, we are told, appears before the Lord as one man. Every angel, and every society, has a function in this body politic corresponding to some particular organ or constituent of the human body. Those in especial intelligence belong to the head, those in whom love is the ruling principle form the heart, the active spirits are the hands, the critical represent the kidneys, and so on with every detail. Even the skin, hair, and nails have their correlatives.

This doctrine of the "Grand Man," as Swedenborg terms it, has been ridiculed by some, because it has not been understood. In order that we may comprehend any spiritual truth, we must, says our author, remove from our minds all ideas of space and time. We are not to regard the Grand Man, therefore, as a monster, into whose bodily form are packed away myriads of other human beings; but as representing in its totality the perfection of human qualities. As, in this world,

no one man can sum up all the possibilities of the race, and each has his own place in the general economy; so in the higher stage of existence every individual is complementary to all the rest, and the full MAN is only seen in the great whole. Hell, it may be added, is, in its totality, a hideous and inhuman monster.

Since time and place cannot be predicated of spiritual things, there is no regular procession of hours, days, and years, or bodily progression from place to place, as in this world. There are times and seasons, but they are spiritual, and mark the changes of state with the individual. Thoreau has caught this suggestion happily—"Morning," he says, "is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me."<sup>1</sup> There is a spiritual sun, as we have said, but this is stationary, appearing always before the faces of the angels at a middle elevation, in accordance with their own spiritual attitude.

Though there is not bodily progression as in this world, angels and spirits are not bound to one locality. Desire brings presence, and when the desire is strong the passage to another's presence is instantaneous. There is no need for laborious trudging through miles of intervening country, nor for vehicular journeys by sea or land. Here, again Thoreau will help us to grasp the truth. "What sort of space," he asks, "is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary? I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another."<sup>2</sup>

Life in heaven, as has been said, is not a monotonous round of religious exercises, but a scene of busy activity. Since useful service is the ground of heavenly happiness, it

<sup>1</sup> *Walden* (Camelot Classics edition), p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 131.

follows that there must be occupations in heaven. Every faculty of the mind will find employment, and idleness is not permitted even in hell. There those who are unwilling are compelled to labour, and only receive food as they perform some service.

A question that severely exercises many minds is that of the relation of the sexes in the other life. It is commonly thought that the spiritual existence will be sexless, because Jesus declared that in heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but that all will be "as the angels of God." Swedenborg boldly asserts that sex is persistent, because in its essence spiritual. There is the male soul and the female soul, and MAN is a compound of the two. Hence when married partners are truly united in this world, they will continue their joint existence in the next; and if the married life has not been entered upon here, or an unsuitable connection has been formed, congenial consorts will be found hereafter by those who desire it. With truly united consorts, the death of one does not effect even temporary separation, except as to bodily presence, for "the spirit of the deceased continually dwells together with the spirit of the survivor, and this even to the death of the latter, when they again meet and are reunited, and love each other more tenderly than before."<sup>1</sup> All married partners meet in the other world, and dwell together for a time; but if their natures are discordant they ultimately part and know each other no more.

The nature of marriage love is discussed at length in Swedenborg's work on *Conjugal Love*,<sup>2</sup> and reasons advanced why it is continued in

heaven. We can only just touch upon the main points of his argument. Since man's life continues after death much the same as it was in the world, his love, which is its chief essential, remains. The love of the opposite sex is strongly developed in most persons, and therefore continues after the body has been put off. "The reason why this love especially remains is, that after death a man is a man, and a woman a woman; and that there is nothing in the soul, in the mind, and in the body, which is not masculine in the male, and feminine in the female; and these two have been so created that they have a powerful striving for conjunction, yea, for conjunction so as to become a one. . . . Now, since the conjunctive inclination is inscribed on each and all things of the male and of the female, it follows that this inclination cannot be obliterated, or die, with the body."<sup>1</sup>

Marriage love originates in the union which exists in God Himself between the Divine Wisdom and the Divine Love, qualities which in their perfection can have no divided existence. In men and women love and wisdom are unequally received, love predominating in the woman, and wisdom in the man; the two sexes are thus personally complementary. The essence of wedded love is spiritual, and therefore it is ineradicable. Without it, even the joys of heaven would be incomplete; for "it is the fundamental love of all celestial and spiritual loves, and hence of all natural loves";<sup>2</sup> and "into that love are collected all joys and all delights from first to last."<sup>3</sup>

☞ In heaven, it is needless to say, there is no decrepitude. As men and women advance in life there,

<sup>1</sup> *Conjugal Love*, No. 321.

<sup>2</sup> Swedenborg adopted the adjective "conjugal" from Ovid, as a softened form of "conjugal"; intending thereby to express a more intimate union than a mere yoking together.

<sup>1</sup> *Conjugal Love*, No. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 56.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* No. 67.



instead of becoming feeble and incapable, their powers increase and develop.

"Those who are in heaven are continually advancing to the spring-time of life, and the more thousands of years they live, the more delightful and happy is the spring to which they attain; and this progression goes on to eternity, with an increase according to the progressions and degrees of their love, charity and, faith. Women who have died old and worn out with age, but who had lived in faith in the Lord, in charity towards their neighbour, and in happy conjugal love with a husband, after a succession of years come more and more into the flower of youth, and into a beauty which exceeds all the conceptions of beauty which can be formed from that which the eye has seen. . . . In a word, *to grow old in heaven is to grow young.*"<sup>1</sup>

Another point upon which Swedenborg corrects prevailing impressions, is in regard to the nature of angels. It is commonly conceived that they are a higher order of beings than men, and that they were created before the human race. Some of them are believed to have rebelled against the Divine authority, and to have been cast out of heaven in consequence. These are what are understood by "the devil and his angels." Swedenborg tells us that this is an erroneous conception: "there is not a single angel in the universal heaven who was originally created such, nor any devil in hell who was created an angel of light and afterwards cast down thither; but all, both in heaven and in hell, are from the human race."<sup>2</sup>

Akin to the interest which is so universal in regard to the possibilities of the future life, though not of so absorbing a nature, is the

curiosity to know whether the myriads of worlds that we see around us are inhabited, and what their inhabitants are like. Writers of fiction have speculated as to the character of the denizens of some of our nearest planetary neighbours; but no one except Swedenborg has ventured to make any positive statements on the subject. In a little work on *The Earths in the Universe*, first published in 1758, he describes the inhabitants of some of the principal planets, of the moon, and of some of the more distant stars. Interesting though the book is, the curious reader will probably not get much satisfaction from his descriptions, for he deals more with their spiritual characteristics than their mundane life. His main object in this work seems to have been to demonstrate that the other heavenly bodies, as well as our earth, exist for the sake of the human race, and that the same Lord reigns supreme in all. His information, he tells us, was gained from spirits who had come from the various earths, and through these he was in some cases enabled to learn facts in regard to the condition of life in the worlds themselves.

It is not necessary to deal at length with the contents of this work, which can scarcely be considered of great importance. The reader may be interested, however, to learn something of its statements.

We have the fullest information in regard to the inhabitants of Mercury and of Jupiter. The former are said to be characterised by a consuming desire for knowledge, and the spirits from that planet love to wander throughout the universe in search of information. The knowledge which they seek, however, is not of outward things, but of the thoughts and characters of other people, and of the essentials of the various matters discussed. When a

<sup>1</sup> *Heaven and Hell*, No. 414.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 311.

spirit from another earth addressed some Mercurian spirits in a learned and rhetorical manner "the only thing they attended to was, whether they heard from him anything which was not known to them before, rejecting thereby such things as obscured the subject, which are chiefly affectations of elegance in expression and of erudition; for these hide the things themselves, and in their place substitute expressions, which are the material forms of things."

Swedenborg found it difficult to explain to these spirits how knowledge could be recorded and fixed for future use in printed books, which are unknown in their world. "They thought that the knowledges on our Earth were on papers, and not so much within the man himself, thus derisively insinuating that the papers, so to speak, knew more than the man."

Not only are the inhabitants of Mercury greedy for knowledge, but eager to communicate it to others. As, however, they are content to rest in knowledge, and do not regard practical ends, they are lacking in judgment, and are conceited in their supposed wisdom.

The inhabitants of Jupiter are of a much higher order; akin, we are told, to the men of the "golden age" of our own Earth. They are simple in their lives and value practical wisdom rather than human learning. "Of the sciences, such as exist on our Earth, they know nothing whatever, nor have they any desire to know."

Whether Swedenborg's statements are regarded as reliable or not, it must be admitted that he has presented us with a beautiful ideal of human life in his description of the inhabitants of Jupiter. Their earth, he tells us, is densely populated, but as it is extremely fertile, and the people desire no more than suffices

for the necessities of existence, there is no scarcity. The duration of life, moreover, is much less than on this Earth, not exceeding on the average about thirty of our years; the population, therefore, does not increase unduly.

Life on this planet is patriarchal. The people are associated in clans, families and households, and their habitual intercourse is confined to their own kindred. "No one ever desires another's goods; nor does it ever enter the mind of anyone to covet any of the goods of another, much less to obtain them by artifice, and still less to attack and plunder them." It was so in the Golden Age: "The love of self and the love of the world were then far away; everyone rejoiced in his own, and not less in another's good. But in course of time this scene was changed and totally reversed, when the lust of exercising dominion and of possessing many things invaded the mind."

Swedenborg thus describes his intercourse with Jovian spirits: "Their approach when they came to me, their stay with me, and their influx at the time, were so gentle and sweet as to be inexpressible." Their presence caused him to be cheerful and smiling. "The tranquillity and delightsomeness with which they inspired me," he says, "sensibly filled my breast and heart: at the same time the longings and anxieties about the future, which cause disquiet and wretchedness, and agitate the mind with various passions, were removed." Their faces, we are told, "are like the faces of the men of our Earth, fair and beautiful; sincerity and modesty shone forth from them." So expressive are they, that facial movements form the principal means of the communication of thought; verbal speech being only accessory. In this, again, they are like the primitive inhabitants of our Earth.

"In the most Ancient or Primeval times sincerity prevailed, and no one cherished a thought which he was not willing should shine forth out of his face. . . . So long as sincerity and rectitude prevailed among men, such speech continued ; but as soon as the mind began to think one thing and speak another, which was the case when man began to love himself and not the neighbour, verbal speech began to increase, the face being either silent or deceitful." The inhabitants of Jupiter are careful, so far as is possible, to face those about them ; they "gladly desire that their face should be seen, because their mind appears from it, for they never show a face at variance with the mind, nor have they the power to do so."

"The spirits of the earth Jupiter are much wiser than the spirits of our Earth ; they also say of ours that they talk much and think little, and that therefore they cannot interiorly perceive many things, and that they cannot even perceive what good is." "The spirits and angels who are from the earth Jupiter have relation, in the Grand Man, to the imaginative part of thought, and thus to an active state of the interior parts."

"Plain living and high thinking" are combined in these people. "They informed me that they do not prepare their food to please the palate, but chiefly for the sake of use ; they added that to them the food which is wholesome is savoury. A conversation took place on this subject among the spirits, and it was urged that it would be well for man to observe this rule, for thus he could ensure having a sound mind in a sound body. It is otherwise with those with whom the taste rules : the body then becomes diseased, at least it becomes inwardly feeble, consequently so does the mind ; for the mind comports it-

self according to the interior state of the recipient parts of the body, as sight and hearing do according to the state of the eye and ear ; hence the folly of placing all the delight of life in luxury and pleasure ; from this too comes dullness in such things as belong to thought and judgment." The Jovians are simple also in the matter of dress ; in the warm latitudes of their planet, they wear little clothing ; "nor are they ashamed of their nakedness, for their minds are chaste." Their worship again is without forms and ceremonies. "They have no holy days, but every morning at sunrise, and every evening at sunset, they perform holy worship to the One only Lord in their tents ; and also, after their manner, sing sacred songs." "They do not fear death there, except on account of leaving their conjugal consorts, their children, or their parents, for they know that they shall live after death, and that they do not quit life because they go to heaven ; wherefore, they do not call death dying, but being heaven-made. Those in that earth who have lived in truly conjugal love, and have taken such care of their children as becomes parents, do not die of disease, but tranquilly as in sleep, and so pass from the world into heaven."

"All the inhabitants of Jupiter are not of this exalted character. There are some who are puffed up with insane pride, and who claim divine honours for themselves: they worship the sun, and wish to be regarded by others as mediatory deities.

"The inhabitants of Mars are of even higher character than those of Jupiter, "the best of all the spirits who come from the earths of this solar system" belonging to that planet. In general disposition they seem to be much like the Jovians."

Space will not permit me to enter into particulars regarding the in-



habitants of Saturn, Venus, the Moon, and various more distant orbs, of whom Swedenborg speaks. It may be mentioned, however, that he describes the dwellers in the Moon as being dwarfs, but possessing thunderous voices, owing to the fact that they "do not, like the inhabitants of other earths, speak from the lungs, but from the abdomen, and thus from some collection of air therein; the reason of which is, that the Moon is not surrounded with an atmosphere of the same kind as that of other earths." It is held by most that the Moon cannot be inhabited on account of the peculiar physical conditions which prevail there. Swedenborg says, however, that "it is known to spirits and angels, that there are inhabitants even in the Moon, and likewise in the moons or satellites which are about the earth Jupiter and the earth Saturn. Even those who have not seen spirits who are from them, and spoken with them, entertain no doubt that there are human beings upon them, for they, too, are earths, and where there is an earth, there is man; for man is the end for the sake of which an earth exists, and nothing has been made by the Supreme Creator without an end."

The uninitiated reader who may chance to take up *The Earths in the Universe*, will find in it many strange, and, to his way of thinking, ridiculous statements; but it must be understood that ideas are often conveyed in the spiritual world by representative appearances, such as that in which a company of Mercurian spirits were seen first as a globe, and "afterwards in a compact body extending itself lengthwise." Again, when Swedenborg describes the appearance and external circumstances of various stellar inhabitants, he does not speak from personal observation, but

from information conveyed by spirits from these earths. Some of these descriptions should perhaps be regarded as representative, also. Although Swedenborg tells us that he was permitted to visit other heavenly bodies, it was in spirit and not in the body; the "things heard and seen," then, were heard and seen with his spiritual senses. "Being led to earths in the universe does not mean being led and translated thither as to the body, but as to the spirit; and the spirit is led through variations of the state of the inner life, which appear to it as progressions through spaces"

One other point must be touched upon before we leave this subject. The dwellers on this earth, at least the more civilised of them, have a tolerably good opinion of themselves; but Swedenborg says that they rank low as compared with those of most other worlds. We have seen what a high ideal of spiritual life is presented by the inhabitants of Jupiter: "The spirits of that earth are not inclined to associate with the spirits of our Earth, because they differ in disposition and manners. They say that the spirits of our Earth are cunning, and are quick and clever in the contrivance of evils, and that they know and think little about what is good." The Earth dwellers, in fact, are too much concerned about material things and too prone to rule their lives by the principle of self-interest, to attain a high spiritual status. Individuals may reach a high development, but the natural disposition of the race is sensuous and external. While the spirits from Jupiter, as has been mentioned, pertain to the imaginative faculty in the "Grand Man," those from our Earth have relation to external sense. It was on account of the low character of the men of this Earth, we are told further, that

the Incarnation took place here ; that the Lord, in this way, might reach the very lowest of the human race.

## CHAPTER XII

### RECEPTION OF TEACHINGS

IN the *Spiritual Diary*, under date 27th August 1748, that is, before Swedenborg had published any of his theological works, we find an interesting entry, regarding their probable reception. "I have conversed," he says, "with spirits concerning the reception the world will give to the particulars which I am going to publish about them. Evil spirits insinuated that nobody would believe me. As I walk the streets, I discuss the question with them, and it has been given me to perceive that I shall have five sorts of readers.

"The first will reject my writings entirely, either because they are of a different persuasion, or are enemies of the faith : they cannot be received by these, whose minds are impenetrable.

"The second will receive them as scientifics [*i.e.* matters of knowledge], and be delighted with them as curiosities.

"The third will receive them intellectually, and with readiness, but their lives will remain unaltered by them.

"The fourth will receive them in a persuasive manner, allowing them to penetrate to amendment of life : to this class they will occur in certain states and do good service.

"The fifth will receive them with joy, and reduce them to practice."

Swedenborg's anticipations were entirely fulfilled. His writings met with an extraordinary variety of reception. Some, like Dean Ekebom, condemned them without examina-

tion, pronouncing them "corrupting, heretical, injurious, and in the highest degree objectionable." The Bishop of Gothenburg regarded his teachings as tinged with Moham-medanism, and described them as spreading like a cancer. Bishop Filenius speaks of "this abominable infection, which is not grounded in sound reason, and still less in God's Holy Word, but consists of untruthful visions and dreams . . . most infamous and untruthful nonsense." Dr Beyer speaks of the "intense hatred with which even mere vague reports respecting Assessor Swedenborg's doctrinal views are regarded."<sup>1</sup>

The hatred and opposition was chiefly from those who did not trouble themselves to examine his teachings. "Those who were able to read his books," said Robsahm, "judged of him then, as they do now, quite differently from those who are unable to read them ; and, what is remarkable, most of those who do read his books become in a greater or less degree his adherents ; although 'for fear of the Jews,' and on account of many and perhaps just causes, they do not openly profess their sentiments."<sup>2</sup> "It is singular," wrote the Abbé Pernety, "or at least very remarkable, that almost all those who have read the writings of Swedenborg for the purpose of refuting them, have finished by adopting his views."<sup>3</sup>

To receptive minds, now as then, Swedenborg's teachings are a source of satisfaction and delight. C. F. Nordensköld, an early Swedish disciple, declared his acquaintance with them to be "the greatest good fortune that had happened to him during his whole life."<sup>4</sup> General Tuxen wrote : "For my part, I thank our Lord, the God of Heaven,

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 324.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 58. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 62.



that I have been acquainted with this great man and his writings. I esteem this as the greatest blessing I have ever experienced in my life, and I hope I shall profit by them in working out my salvation." <sup>1</sup> The Rev. Thos Hartley, one of the earliest English disciples and translators of Swedenborg, wrote to him thus: "May I be permitted to tell you from a heart full of gratitude, that I consider myself thrice blessed that your writings, by the Divine Providence, have fallen into my hands? for from them, as from a living fountain, I have drawn so many things, as well for instruction and edification as for my great delight, and I have been freed by them from so many fears, and from so many errors, doubts, and opinions, which held my mind in perplexity and bondage, that I seem to myself sometimes, as if transferred among the angels." <sup>2</sup>

"It was remarkable," says Robsahm, "that Swedenborg, unlike sectarian persons, never tried to make proselytes, or to force his explanations upon anyone" <sup>3</sup>; and the Abbé Pernety testifies to the same effect: "He was not governed by that species of egotism usually noticed in those who start new ideas on matters of doctrine, neither did he desire to make proselytes, nor to communicate his views to any, except such as he considered single-minded, disposed to listen peaceably, capable of understanding him, and lovers of the truth." <sup>4</sup> He seemed, indeed, almost indifferent as to their immediate reception. Robsahm once asked him how his teachings would be received in Christendom, and was answered: "About that I can say nothing; but I suppose that in their proper time they will be received;

for otherwise the Lord would not have disclosed what has heretofore lain concealed." <sup>1</sup> He was a great believer in the power of the press, and sent his books forth quietly into the world, hoping that their intrinsic reasonableness would prove convincing. He presented copies to the principal Universities in his own and foreign countries; also to the Bishops of Sweden, England, Holland, and Germany, and to other persons of note. His expectation was that some of the learned would accept his teachings, and then spread them through the world; but he was grievously disappointed. Instead of the bishops and clergy being his chief supporters, with a few notable exceptions, they either treated his writings with contempt, or became his persecutors. John Christian Cuno remarks that "his books have been for years before the public, without a single theologian taking any notice of them." <sup>2</sup> "I wish very much," he writes in another place, "that upright men, whom God has placed as watchmen upon the walls of Zion, had occupied themselves with this man some time ago. I have read his writings and proved them impartially; but in my opinion dogmas are taught there which deserve to be examined more thoroughly by upright theologians, and there are others which ought to have been refuted at the very beginning" <sup>3</sup> But no! "they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark." In appealing to Swedenborg to make a more public declaration of his mission, Cuno reminds him that he had "sent copies of his works to all the bishops in England; yet not a single one has made a reply. . . . Your last work," he adds, "you have distributed among the clergy of every denomination in this city [Amsterdam] not only among the

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 439.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 4. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 58 and 59.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 461. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 464.



Reformed, but also among the Roman Catholics. You have also made it known in other towns, and in the universities of Holland. Almost a whole month has since elapsed, and I do not hear of a single person who is rising up against you."<sup>1</sup> Swedenborg himself confesses that he had sent his works "to all the archbishops, and the chief men of this kingdom [England]; and, nevertheless, not a single voice was heard."<sup>2</sup> He told Springer that he had presented them to the bishops of Sweden, also, but without result; they had received them with the same indifference as the bishops of England.<sup>3</sup> It was not merely indifference he met with from the Swedish bishops, however; some of them were his active opponents during his life, and, after his death, two, who were his heirs, proposed to throw his manuscripts into the fire.<sup>4</sup>

Swedenborg must have had a strong conviction of the necessity of his labours to the world, to go on writing in the face of such indifference and opposition. That he was disappointed in the way his works were received, we know from his own confession, but he never allowed his disappointment to lead to discouragement. Only four copies of the first volume of his *Arcana Cælestia* were sold in two months; yet he submitted to this as the will of Providence, and went on to write the other seven volumes. In later years, when his name became known as the author of these works, he met with more encouragement, and some of his books had a large sale. In a letter, written from Amsterdam in 1771, to the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt, he states that the *Arcana Cælestia* "can no longer be obtained either here in Holland, or in England, as all the copies are

sold," and offers to try and obtain a copy for him from a friend in Sweden. *Conjugal Love*, which was interdicted in his own country, was "very much in demand in Paris, and in many places in Germany," in 1769,<sup>1</sup> and was twice reprinted in consequence of the confiscation of copies in Sweden; the *Brief Exposition of the Doctrines of the New Church*, we are told, "has been spread throughout the whole of Christendom, Sweden excepted";<sup>2</sup> the *Intercourse between the Soul and the Body* "has been very well received abroad in all places, as well as by many intelligent persons in Stockholm";<sup>3</sup> The librarian of the Royal Library at Stockholm informs us that Swedenborg's works "have been favourably received everywhere";<sup>4</sup> and the Rev. Thomas Hartley, writing a few years after Swedenborg's death, says: "It is a matter of great satisfaction to find that the small part of his works which has already been translated into English, has met with more success than might be expected in so short a time; and by the accounts received of the favourable reception of them in foreign countries, we have good reason to hope that this highly gifted ministry will in due time more fully appear, as a light shining in a dark world, to check the progress of infidelity, to diffuse the right understanding of the Sacred Scriptures, and to turn many to the knowledge of the Lord."<sup>5</sup>

Though Swedenborg's works were widely circulated, it does not appear that he made many converts during his lifetime. He told General Tuxen that he did not know more than about fifty persons who favoured his doctrine.<sup>6</sup> A small

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 308. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 317.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 406.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 521 and 522.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 440.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 468.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 989. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 532.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 790.

number of these were to be found in his own country, though he tells us "there are few in Sweden who penetrate with their understandings into any matter belonging to theology."<sup>1</sup> The most prominent of his Swedish disciples were Count Höpken, Dr Gabriel Beyer, Professor of Greek in Gothenburg University, and Dr Johan Rosén, Professor of Eloquence and Poetry in the same seat of learning. The two latter were subjected to bitter persecution on account of their acceptance of Swedenborg's doctrines. For almost a year their case was before the Consistory of Gothenburg; and though their enemies did not succeed in getting them deprived of office, or made to recant, as they desired, the two professors received the royal censure, and were restricted in their duties afterwards. A full history of this heresy hunt will be found in Dr R. L. Tafel's *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 282-386.

Beyer's and Rosén's first introductions to Swedenborg and his teachings came about in this way. "In the year 1766, Swedenborg arrived at Gothenburg for the purpose of continuing his journey thence to England. Immediately after his arrival he engaged a berth in a ship, which was to sail for London in a few days. During his stay at Gothenburg, Beyer happened by chance to make his acquaintance, and as he did not know Swedenborg personally, but only by hearsay, and as he shared the prejudices of those times with regard to his religious views, he was very much astonished when he found Swedenborg discoursing in a most sensible manner, and without the least indication of any confusion in his imagination and thoughts, of which he had been suspected. The next day he invited Swedenborg to dine

in company with Dr Rosén. After dinner Beyer expressed a desire to hear in the presence of Rosén a brief statement of Swedenborg's religious system. The latter, therefore, gave him a sketch of his views with the ardour of inspiration and with logical clearness in all his arguments, so that both his hearers were very much astonished."<sup>1</sup> After further study of his works, both became convinced, and Beyer especially exerted himself to facilitate their study. Besides several explanatory treatises, he prepared a voluminous index to his master's works, which was published in Amsterdam in 1779, after having occupied its compiler thirteen years in preparation.

Other Swedes who took a prominent part in the dissemination of Swedenborg's teachings were the brothers Nordensköld, sons of Colonel Nordensköld of Finland; Johan Tybeck, a Lutheran minister, who was persecuted for heresy and deprived of his ministerial office in his sixty-sixth year, only to make him more vigorous in his advocacy of the new doctrines; Major Gyllenhaal; C. L. Schönherr, Councillor of Commerce; Christopher Springer, and C. B. Wadstrom; the two last named residing in London. Arvid Ferelius, pastor of the Swedish Church in London, was also favourable to Swedenborg's teachings, but not openly.

Out of Sweden there were many prominent persons who wholly, or in part, accepted them. The Danish General Tuxen, already mentioned, was an ardent disciple; (Etinger, prelate of Murrhard, was the first to translate some of Swedenborg's works into German, and had to endure persecution therefor; the celebrated Lavater has been described as "an apt student of his

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 307.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. pp. 624 and 625.

writings," and several of his letters to Swedenborg attest his interest; Oberlin is said to have remarked respecting Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*: "I know from my own experience that everything in this book is true." The Marquis de Thomé translated some of the works into French, and exerted himself in many ways to promote their circulation; and the Abbé Pernety was also an open advocate of Swedenborg's teachings, but one who allowed his prejudices to influence him to the extent of mistranslating, abridging and, in some cases, falsifying the author's statements.

It was in England, however, that Swedenborg found most acceptance, and it is among English-speaking nations that most of his disciples are to be found at the present day. One of the first to recognise the deep spirituality of Swedenborg's doctrine was the Rev. John Clowes, for sixty-two years Rector of St John's Church, Manchester, a man of much learning and exemplary life.<sup>1</sup> He translated almost the whole of the theological works into English, —a stupendous task,—and openly advocated the views contained in them.

Clowe's introduction to the study of Swedenborg was under somewhat remarkable circumstances, and, like that of many other disciples, apparently accidental. A friend persuaded him to procure *The True Christian Religion*, then lately published; but he was so little interested in the work that he allowed it to lie for many months on

his library table without opening it. One day, however, as he was about to set out upon a visit to a friend in the country, he casually opened the volume, and his eye caught the words *Divinum Humanum*. "He merely thought it was an odd sort of phrase—closed the book—and rode off to his friends. He awoke next morning with a most brilliant appearance before his eyes, surpassing the light of the sun: and in the midst of the glory were the words *Divinum Humanum*. He did not then recollect having ever seen those words before: he thought the whole an illusion, rubbed his eyes, got up, and made every effort to get rid of it; but in vain. Wherever he went, or whatever he did, all day, the glorious appearance was still before him; though he spoke of it to no one. He retired to rest at night, and fell asleep. When he awoke the morning following, the words, *Divinum Humanum*, encircled by a blaze of light still more glorious than before, immediately flashed upon his sight. He then recollected that those were the words which he had seen in the book on his table at home. He got up, made an apology to his friend, and took an abrupt leave; and, in his own words, no lover ever galloped off to see his mistress with half the eagerness that he galloped home to read about *Divinum Humanum*. He speedily perused the whole book; but his feelings and convictions on reading it are best described in his own words. In a paper left behind him he says, 'The delight produced in my mind by the first perusal of the work entitled the *Vera Christiana Religio*, no language could fully express. . . . It seemed as if a continual blaze of new and recreating light had been poured forth on my delighted understanding, opening it to the contemplation of the sublimest mysteries of wisdom, in a manner

<sup>1</sup> De Quincey described him as "the holiest of men whom it has been my lot to meet." Though he has been dead seventy-five years, he is not forgotten; "his memory is still green in Manchester," remarked Bishop Fraser, and in proof of the truth of this assertion, it may be mentioned that a new edition of his *Life*, by Theodore Compton, was issued in 1898.



and degree, and with a force of satisfactory evidence, which I had never known before.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr Clowes found a coadjutor in the work of translation, in fact a predecessor by several years, in the person of the Rev. Thomas Hartley, M.A., Rector of Winwick, Northamptonshire, a learned and saintly man like himself, who had the privilege, enjoyed by few Englishmen, of personal intercourse with Swedenborg.

Another Englishman who knew Swedenborg personally, and fully accepted his teachings, was William Cookworthy, a minister of the Society of Friends, and a prominent citizen of Plymouth. “On his first opening one of Swedenborg’s works,” we are told, “the book was soon thrown down in a fit of disgust. From some cause or other, not now remembered, he was induced to make another trial; and from that time forward he became gradually more and more convinced of the soundness of the views which Swedenborg had taken of scriptural truths. So convinced indeed did he become of the truth and utility of his works, that . . . he, in part, translated from the original Latin the treatise on *Heaven and Hell* and, under the revision of the Rev. T. Hartley, had it printed in 1778, in a quarto volume, by the Friends’ bookseller, James Phillips, of George Yard, Lombard Street, London, at his own expense.”<sup>2</sup>

Dr Messiter, a London physician of some eminence, was an intimate friend of Swedenborg’s, and was also acquainted with Mr Hartley. In a letter of the latter’s to Swedenborg, he communicates an offer from himself and Dr Messiter to provide a home for the aged theologian in England, in case persecution should

make it uncomfortable for him to remain in his own country. Swedenborg declined the offer, as he did not share his friend’s fear of persecution for him.

Another medical man among the early receivers of Swedenborg’s doctrines in England was Dr William Spence. He assisted in the publication of the *Apocalypse Explained* (a posthumous work), and was one of the small party that first met together, in the year 1783, for the mutual study of our author’s writings.

Other early disciples in England were Benedict Chastanier, a French physician, who translated some of Swedenborg’s works into French; Henry Peckitt, a retired physician and apothecary, possessed of considerable wealth and wide culture, who bore the whole expense of publishing the *Apocalypse Explained*; Peter Provo, another medical man (the doctors at this time seemed to have been especially receptive), the translator of several of the smaller works; Henry Servanté, who edited the first magazine devoted to the advocacy of Swedenborg’s teachings; James Augustus Tulk, a man of independent means, which he employed freely in the dissemination of the new doctrines; and last, but not least, Robert Hindmarsh, Printer Extraordinary to the Prince of Wales, who did more than most, by preaching, writing, translating, publishing, and expending his not too abundant worldly wealth, to bring them before the world.

Generally speaking, the early receivers of Swedenborg’s teachings found themselves isolated and misunderstood. They naturally, therefore, longed for the sympathy of kindred spirits; and this led to the formation of societies for the study of their revered author, and for mutual edification. In Sweden C. F. Nordensköld founded the “Ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 1168 and 1169.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 1172.

egetic-Philanthropic Society" which numbered among its members many well-known persons. It was, however, broken up in 1789, and succeeded by the "*Societas pro Fide et Charitate*," which continued in existence until about 1835.

Hindmarsh's acquaintance with Swedenborg's writings began in 1782, and "from that time," he says, "I began to search out other readers of the same writings in London, in order to form a society; but in one year I only found three or four besides myself." In order to discover what amount of general interest there was in their study, an advertisement was issued inviting all sympathisers to meet at the London Coffee-House, Ludgate Hill, on the evening of the 5th December 1783. Only five friends appeared, but the outcome of this meeting was the establishment, in 1784, of "*The Theosophical Society*, instituted for the purpose of promoting the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem, by translating, printing, and publishing the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg." White gives the names of twenty-five early members and sympathisers, among which are several of note. No less than six are artists, sculptors, or engravers, including John Flaxman, R.A., P. J. Loutherboung, and William Sharp, the engraver. There was one eminent musician, F. H. Barthelemon; three medical men, Spence, Peckitt, and Chastanier, above mentioned; a Proctor of Doctors' Commons; a barrister; Lieut. - General Rainsford, afterwards Governor of Gibraltar; three clergymen, and various merchants, tradesmen, and others.

In Lancashire great interest was aroused in the study of Swedenborg, chiefly through the energy of the Rev. John Clowes, and reading circles were formed in many of the towns and villages, which he visited from time to time. To his labours is due

the fact that Lancashire is at the present day the great stronghold of Swedenborg's followers. Clowes himself was averse to any separation from the Established Church, and continued his own connection with it to the end of his days, notwithstanding efforts that were made to procure his expulsion; but his converts no longer found a home in orthodoxy, and so, by the inevitable law of spiritual gravitation, formed themselves into "New Church" societies.

It was Clowes who organised the first of the several societies that have undertaken the printing and publishing of Swedenborg's works, but this was of a semi-private character among his own friends. In 1810 was established the London "*Society for Printing and Publishing the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*," generally known as the "*Swedenborg Society*." It is a catholic body, embracing in its membership many who are not included in the organisation of the New Church. One of its most devoted supporters was the late Rev. Augustus Clissold, M.A., who, among other benefactions, purchased and presented to the Society the house in Bloomsbury Street from which its publications have since emanated. The Society possesses considerable funded property and issues its publications at a nominal price; presenting also many volumes to clergymen and ministers of different denominations, and to public libraries. In this manner, many thousands of volumes have been circulated in recent years. Its efforts have been chiefly confined to keeping the theological writings before the public, but a movement has been lately set on foot for the republication of the scientific and philosophical treatises, which have been out of print for many years.

Of the organisation known as the "New Church," or "New Jerusalem

Church,"<sup>1</sup> there is no need to say much here. The spread of new doctrines naturally leads to association, and the New Church has thus arisen among those who have discovered in Swedenborg's teachings a new, constructive system of theology, and whose convictions make it impossible for them to worship in harmony with the members of other communities. It is not a sect in the sense of being a division, or offshoot, of some other body; it is a gathering together, from within and without the Churches, of men who have found a new faith.

In point of numbers the New Church is still small, counting less than seven thousand registered members in the United Kingdom, with a somewhat larger number in the United States, and a small contingent in the principal British colonies and European countries. But if small in numbers, New Church people are strong in their faith, and assert that their doctrines have very largely influenced current modes of religious thought.<sup>2</sup> In the disintegration of orthodox theology, which is visibly taking place in our day, they see the preparation for a wider and fuller reception of their cherished doctrines.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SWEDENBORG'S SCIENCE

WITH his usual tendency to disparagement, White remarks: "That we are without record of any scientific fruit, great or small, which derives its parentage from Swedenborg may

<sup>1</sup> New Church people repudiate the title "Swedenborgian," commonly applied to them, as implying a reverence for Swedenborg as the author of a system which they believe to be Divine.

<sup>2</sup> A series of articles on "Swedenborg and Modern Thought," by the present

be safely affirmed."<sup>1</sup> Safely affirmed, no doubt, so far as the average reader's ability to contradict the writer is concerned; but the statement is so entirely apart from the facts of the case, that, whether ignorance or intentional detraction lies behind it, either must be regarded as almost equally culpable. It will be our task in this chapter to examine the evidence as to Swedenborg's right to be regarded as an original discoverer; and we are confident that the result will be the satisfaction, and possibly the astonishment, of the reader.

That our author anticipated many modern discoveries and theories is a well-established fact; though, perhaps, injudicious admirers have claimed too much in this respect. Here, however, is a sober statement by the professor of physics, Mr Thomas French, in the University of Cincinnati, U.S.A. The following doctrines of modern science, he says, are more or less definitely stated in Swedenborg's *Principia*, published in 1734: "The atomic theory; the solar origin of the earth and her sister planets; the undulatory theory of light; the nebular hypothesis [In regard to this, an article by Professor Holden, formerly of the United States Naval Observatory, in *The North American Review*, October 1880, forcibly testifies to the validity of Swedenborg's claims<sup>2</sup>]; that heat is a mode of motion; that magnetism and electricity are closely connected; that electricity is a form of ethereal motion; and that molecular forces

writer, appeared in *The New Century Review* for January, March, June, September, and November 1898, showing how largely some of our most eminent nineteenth-century writers have drawn upon Swedenborg. The articles have been republished by James Speirs, 1 Bloomsbury Street, W.C.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> See extract from this article below p. 101.



are due to the action of an ethereal medium.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr J. D. Morell says of Swedenborg's scientific studies: “The results of these studies exist to the present day in the form of volumes and tracts, which travel over almost the whole surface of natural history and science, and in which it is only just to say, are found, more or less obscurely, many of the germs of recent and brilliant discoveries.”<sup>2</sup>

Leaving generalities, let us follow our author through some of the many scientific subjects which he took up and observe the impress of his mind upon them. We will begin with his own special subjects of geology and metallurgy.

Baron Benzelius, in a paper read before the Scandinavian Scientific Association in 1842, says:

“Emanuel Swedenborg, who became famous in many respects, was the first who called attention in a printed work to a rise of the Swedish coast. In 1719 he published a little work entitled: *Respecting the great Depth of Water and the Strong Tides in the Primeval World; Proofs from Sweden*. In a dedication to the Queen, he congratulated her on ruling over a land which is constantly enlarged at the expense of the sea. Among the proofs that a sea in a state of great commotion at one time swept over Sweden, he quotes the ridges of our mountains, whose general direction from north to south he had correctly observed; and likewise the fact that all the stones occurring therein are rolled, worn off, and rounded, even those which weigh from five to ten *skeppund*. He was acquainted with Snäcklagren on the Kappelback, near

Uddevalla, and several other places of a similar kind on the western coast of Sweden. He makes a report of the skeleton of a whale which during his stay at Upsala was discovered in West Gothland, ten Swedish miles in the country, and which was left in the care of Professor Roberg, that it might be deposited by him in the anatomical museum of the University. He describes also the remnants of a wrecked ship which were excavated far up on the land, as well as some gigantic pots which he examined and found to have been hollowed out by other loose stones which were agitated to and fro by water in a state of great commotion.” After mentioning some other writers on the same subject, Benzelius declares that “none of these writers, with the exception of Swedenborg, had made genuine geological examinations, and that they all treated their subjects from a historico-geographical point of view.”<sup>1</sup>

A recent popular scientific writer, the Rev. H. N. Hutchinson, B.A., F.G.S., remarks: “Emanuel Swedenborg, who in his earlier days was assessor in the School of Mines in Sweden, was probably the first to describe the erratics so conspicuous in that country, and to endeavour to explain them. He put forward the theory that they had been deposited there by a great marine deluge; and thus he also accounts for some of the other phenomena, such as the peculiar ridges of sand and gravel known as *Äsar* (in Scotland as *Kames*).”<sup>2</sup>

Of the practical value of Swedenborg's geological and metallurgical labours, we have abundant evidence. “We should never be able to finish,” says Professor Schleiden, “if we should attempt to enumerate

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in article on “Swedenborg and Aristotle,” in *New Church Review*, 1895, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> *An Historical and Critical View of Speculative Philosophy of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd Edition, vol. i. p. 315.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 896 and 897.

<sup>2</sup> *Prehistoric Man and Beast* (Smith, Elder & Co., 1896), p. 92.

all the improvements which Swedenborg introduced in the working of the mines of his native country, and it would be impossible to say how great were his merits in promoting the industry and the arts of Sweden."<sup>1</sup>

As we have already mentioned, Swedenborg's treatise on iron in his *Opera Philosophica et Mineralia* was translated into French by M. Bouchu, and embodied in the magnificent *Description des Arts et Métiers*, issued by the Royal Academy of Sciences, "because this work was found to be the best on this subject."<sup>2</sup>

Dr Percy remarks: "The metallurgical works of this remarkable man seem to be very imperfectly known—at least they are rarely, if ever, quoted; and yet none are, in my judgment, more worthy of the attention of those interested in the history of metallurgy. They form two tolerably thick folio volumes, copiously illustrated with copper-plate engravings, and magnificently printed."<sup>3</sup>

In connection with his metallurgical studies, Swedenborg made careful investigations into the nature of fire, and the construction of furnaces and stoves. The air-tight stove described by Swedenborg in his *New Observations and Discoveries respecting Iron and Fire*, published in 1721, is said to be the same in principle as one patented in recent years in Washington.<sup>4</sup>

Swedenborg theorised much on the origin and phenomena of matter; and, though some of his theories seem to us crude and mechanical, he undoubtedly came to some happy and suggestive conclusions, and gave hints that have been accepted by

more recent investigators. He suggested the atomic theory in his *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, where he says (No. 630): "Every series of things simultaneous, or, in other words, every aggregate of things co-ordinate, admits of being divided till you arrive at its unit; beyond which you cannot proceed further, and yet leave a unit, or a part of that degree."

In the year 1695, Sir Isaac Newton had propounded the corpuscular theory of light, and his great authority had borne down all opposition. Swedenborg was familiar with his theory, but could not accept it, declaring firmly in favour of the view now universally accepted. He says in his *Principia*: "Motion diffused from a given centre through a contiguous medium or volume of particles of ether produces light."<sup>1</sup> It is very remarkable, too, that he should have conceived that there must be some connection between light and electricity. Of certain particles he says: "If they are put in motion by means of the vibration of the parts in any hard body in which they reside, in this case also light is excited, and in like manner electricity as long as the vibration continues."<sup>2</sup>

"M. Dumas distinctly ascribes to Swedenborg the origin of the modern science of crystallography. He says, 'It is then to him we are indebted for the first idea of making cubes, tetrahedrons, pyramids, and the different crystalline forms, by grouping the spheres; and it is an idea which has since been renewed by several distinguished men, Wollaston in particular.'"<sup>3</sup> Professor F. C. Calvert also asserted in a public lecture that "Swedenborg was the first to discover that atoms were

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by M. Matter in his *Vie de Swedenborg*, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Swedenborg, as a *Philosopher*, and *Man of Science*, by R. L. Tafel, Ph.D., p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in White's *Life*, vol. i. p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> Swedenborg, as a *Philosopher*, etc., p. 204.

<sup>1</sup> *Principia*, vol. ii. p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Swedenborg, as a *Philosopher*, etc., p. 245.



spheres, and that with them cubes, octahedrons, etc., could be formed."

Though he gave so much attention to scientific theories, he always had an eye for putting them to some practical use. In his *Dædalus*, to which we have referred before, there is a description of a new ear trumpet for the deaf, designed in accordance with the laws which regulate the reflection of sound waves from hard substances. The article is accompanied by drawings and a mathematical discussion of the theory on which it is based. In the same work there is a description of a simple form of air pump which depends on the fact that the pressure of the air can only sustain a column of water about thirty feet high. Nor ought we to omit referring to his machine gun, which is also described and illustrated. Even the idea of a flying machine, about which we hear so much to-day, exercised his inventive powers. In papers found after his death, and since reproduced by photo-lithography, there is a drawing of such a machine and a description of it. To Swedenborg also is due the first conception of a tank in which to test models of ships; a plan now adopted by our Admiralty, and in a still more elaborate way by the Navy Department of the United States.

In his monograph on Mercurial Air Pumps, Professor S. P. Thompson, Principal of the Technical College, Finsbury, gives to Swedenborg the credit of inventing the first mercurial air pump. He quotes his description of it in the original Latin, and adds that, fitted with the valves that were usual in those days, it would be effective.

While his *Principia* deals mainly with the physical properties of matter, he has some very remarkable passages in the *Introduction* relating to what is now known as evolution. Mr Herbert Spencer is

<sup>1</sup> *Swedenborg, as a Philosopher*, etc. p. 245.

usually credited with the conception that the motions of the ether had much to do with the production of the sense of sight. But in the clearest way Swedenborg propounds this theory. He says: "The ether seems to have formed in the eye a mechanism of its own by which its vibrations can be received."<sup>1</sup> Still more remarkable is the statement with regard to the ear: "The undulating air flows into the ear, and occasions in its tympanum a motion imitative of itself, . . . ; so that [it] seems to have formed a mechanism of its own."<sup>2</sup> In another place he says that "Man is made after the motion of the elements,"<sup>3</sup> a saying that sums up Mr Spencer's theory. The fact that he afterwards abandoned this view, should not stand in the way of our giving him the credit of first propounding it.

Magnetism absorbed much of Swedenborg's attention at different periods of his life, and he is credited with anticipating many modern discoveries. Professor Patterson, of Pennsylvania University, wrote to Dr Atter, in acknowledging a book of Swedenborg's which the latter had sent to him: "Many of the experiments and observations in magnetism, presented in this work, are believed to be of much more modern date, and are unjustly ascribed to much more recent writers."<sup>4</sup>

"Fifty years after its publication [Swedenborg's *Opera Philosophica et Mineralia*], on the report of a commission to the unfortunate Louis XV., that there did not yet exist any theory of the magnet, the Marquis de Thomé responded indignantly and at length, declaring that the *Opera Philosophica* of Sweden-

<sup>1</sup> *Principia*, vol. i. p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Swedenborg, as a Philosopher*, etc., p. 151.



borg was held in high esteem in all Europe, and that the most celebrated men had 'not disdained to draw materials from it to assist them in their labours'; that 'the theory of the Swedish author is a true theory of the magnet, and of all magnetism'; and that M. Camus, who performed such surprising things with the magnet before their eyes, admitted that he had 'derived from this author all the knowledge he exhibited on the subject.' To this we may add," says Mr Worcester, "that some practical electricians of the present day are finding in this theory explanations of results which they do not find explained by any other."<sup>1</sup>

In forming his theory of magnetism, he had recourse to the experiments of Musschenbroeck, one of the greatest physicists of that day. The theory is, in substance, that magnetism consists in a motion of something round each molecule, and that in a mass of iron these motions concur so as to produce a continuous spontaneous motion both within and without the mass. This is exceedingly close to the modern theory. That it should have been propounded long before any connection between magnetism and electricity had been experimentally demonstrated is a striking testimony to his genius. In this matter he was no mere theorist. A passage which he quotes from Musschenbroeck well expresses his attitude towards this and other scientific questions. "The only way remaining to us as philosophers, of detecting the cause of the magnetic phenomena, is by rejecting the lust of hypothesis, as I have often said, and which cannot be too often repeated; by dedicating our labours to the institution of experiments

and to observations upon the magnetic phenomena; thus by seriously setting to work, and not by wasting our time in sitting still and doing nothing but indulge in reveries; for as Reamur has wisely observed, natural philosophy has been studied too much in this manner, and to its prejudice."

It is in his contributions to astronomical knowledge, however, that Swedenborg's anticipations of modern discovery are the most remarkable. It can scarcely be questioned that the nebular theory of the formation of planetary systems originated with him; he also first conceived the idea of a harmonious relation of the different systems, and assigned its position in the galaxy to our own; he announced the translatory motion of the stars along the Milky Way, and propounded the doctrine of a cyclic return in the movements of the planets.

Respecting his right to be regarded as the originator of the nebular theory, generally attributed to Laplace and Kant, the evidence is strong and most interesting. Professor E. S. Holden, of Lick Observatory, wrote thus, in 1880, in *The North American Review*:

"It has long been known to students of the philosophical writings of Emanuel Swedenborg that he was the author of an elaborate theory of the origin of the solar and stellar system, which was the prototype of those now received. The facts in the case are that in his *Principia*, published in 1734, a complete system of cosmogony was proposed, in which the genesis of the planets and satellites from a primitive nebulous mass was maintained. The details of the imagined process are given and are illustrated with drawings in the fullest manner.

"Bohn, the publisher, had in his possession a copy of Swedenborg's *Principia*, containing Buffon's auto-

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Mission of Emanuel Swedenborg*, by Benjamin Worcester. Boston: Roberts Bros., 1892: p. 98.

graph and bearing marks of use. There is no doubt, when the essential points of the three systems are considered, that the suggestion of the system of Swedenborg (published fifteen years before Buffon's) influenced him largely, and that the ideas of Buffon, with the reflections on the construction of the heavens by the later Herschel, led Laplace to the final form of his nebular hypothesis."

Both Kant and Buffon had some acquaintance with Swedenborg, and the former jealously remarked upon the similarity of some of our author's theories to his own. "Laplace owns that Buffon first suggested to him the idea of the derivation of planets and their moons from their suns."<sup>1</sup>

Dr Magnus Nyrén, Astronomer at the Observatory of Pulkowa, Russia, published an article, in 1879, on *Swedenborg and the Nebular Hypothesis*,<sup>2</sup> in which he gave full credit to the latter as the originator of the theory. "It cannot be disputed," he says, "that the real germ of the nebular hypothesis, namely, that the entire solar system has formed itself out of a single chaotic mass which rolled itself at first into a colossal sphere and afterwards threw off a ring which then through continued rotation at length broke into parts, these finally contracting into balls, planets—that to this idea Swedenborg was the first to give utterance. Kant's work on the same subject, *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels*, appeared, for example, in 1755, thus twenty-one years later; Laplace published his hypothesis sixty-two years later. And here we must remark that Swedenborg, in all probability, has given the more correct form to his theory,

in so far as—and this Laplace has admitted—the planets have arisen from the shattered rings (according to the vortical theory, Swedenborg found only one such necessary), and not, as Kant supposed, through a conglomeration formed immediately out of the original vapour mass."<sup>1</sup>

Swedenborg's theory differed from that of Laplace, in that he regarded the planets as being projected from the body of the sun, or rather from a nebulous ring that surrounded it, and as gradually receding to their present orbits: whereas Laplace assumed that the atmosphere of the sun once extended far beyond the orbit of the most distant of the planets, which were formed successively by its condensation into nebulous rings as the central mass contracted. Swedenborg's theory also postulated a central vortical area, which first gave rotation to the sun, and incidentally to its progeny, the planets; while Laplace's theory was based upon the law of gravitation. Mr Beswick contends that Swedenborg's theory explains more of the phenomena of the solar system than Laplace's, and holds that it is destined yet to supersede it. One point that he insists upon is that, if the planets were formed at the successive confines of the solar atmosphere, the speed of rotation would decrease with those that approached nearer to the sun; whereas the contrary is the fact, as we should expect to find if the planets were thrown out from the central orb.

The following is a brief statement of Swedenborg's theory of the solar system. The sun he assumed to be a mass of matter in a state of incandescence, revolving by inherent vortical force. From this body were thrown off vapours, which gathered into a nebulous ring in the plane of the equator. By condensation this ring became more and more solid, and

<sup>1</sup> White's *Life of Swedenborg*, vol. i. p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Vierteljahrsschrift der Astronomischen Gesellschaft*, p. 81 (a translation appeared in *The New Church Review* for July 1897).

<sup>1</sup> *New Church Review*, July 1897, p. 377.



at length broke and scattered into space the masses which subsequently formed the planets of the solar system. The nebulous ring, whirling with the rapid rotation of the central body, gave to the chaotic masses thus detached a rotatory movement of their own. This was naturally greatest when they were near to the sun, otherwise they would have fallen back into his body; but by degrees they receded to their present orbits and attained their present rate of motion. The satellites also were formed from nebulous rings about the equatorial zones of their respective planets. There was a time, he says, when the rotation of the earth on its axis only occupied about two hours, and its annual journey was accomplished in no more than a month of our time. This he concludes was a time of perpetual spring, the rapid changes preventing any extremes of climate. By degrees, as the days and the years lengthened, the heat and cold strengthened, and our years and days, with the changes of climate they give rise to, became as they are now.

Of course, this is largely speculation; but it is interesting to note that such speculations are being revived by modern astronomers and held to be more than probable. Sir Robert S. Ball, for example, accounts for the formation of the moon in a manner precisely similar to Swedenborg's conjecture. He endeavours to prove that the moon had its birth in the formation of a terrestrial belt around the equatorial zone of the earth, this belt collapsing into a planetary orb, which then gradually receded from the primary that gave it birth. He says, and the reader cannot but mark the striking approximation of his statements to Swedenborg's:

"At the critical epoch to which our retrospect extends, the length of the day was only a very few

hours. I cannot tell you exactly how many. It seems to have been more than two and less than four. If we call it *three* hours we shall not be far from the truth. The day could never have been much less. If the rate of rotation exceeds this limit the equatorial regions of the earth could no longer cling together. It can be shown that the rotation of the earth when on the point of rupture corresponds to a length of the day somewhere about the critical value of *three hours*.<sup>1</sup> . . . At length the cohesion of the molten matter of the earth could no longer resist; a separation took place; one portion consolidated to form our present earth; the other portion consolidated to form the moon.

"At this epoch the moon must have been so close to the earth that the two bodies were almost touching. Hence some millions of years ago the moon completed its journey in a week instead of twenty-eight days as at present. Looking back earlier still, we find the month has dwindled down to a day, then down to a few hours, until at that wonderful epoch when the moon was almost touching the earth, the moon spun round the earth once every three hours. . . .

"But this condition could not last; it was a state of unstable equilibrium. Either the moon must fall back to the earth or move away. The moon exists to show that it did not return, but commenced its out-

<sup>1</sup> Mr Beswick contends that Swedenborg's calculation, "less than two hours," was strictly correct. "We know experimentally," he says, "that the centrifugal force at the equator is  $\frac{1}{180}$  the force of gravity. And the time in which the earth must revolve on its axis in order that centrifugal force at the equator may equal the force of gravity, is  $\frac{1}{7}$  of its present period of 24 hours. Hence  $\frac{24}{7} = 3\frac{3}{7} = 1$  hour, 24 minutes, 42 seconds, or less than two hours, as stated by Swedenborg" (see article on "Swedenborg as a Scientist," in *New Church Review* for July 1894, pp. 413-419).



ward journey. As it recedes its period increases also. It began with three hours and it has increased until our present month of 656 hours.

"The rotation of the earth also modified. Directly the moon receded, the earth was no longer under an obligation to keep the same face thereto, and its length of day increased from three hours to twenty-four."<sup>1</sup>

Sir Robert Ball speaks of this as a new idea, which struck him with surprise when he first read of it "not many months ago." "But," he adds, "the evidence is unimpeachable."

Swedenborg stated that "the common axis of the sphere, or sidereal heavens, seems to be the Milky Way, where there is the largest gathering of stars";<sup>2</sup> as to which statement Dr Nyrén remarks: "If there is no other meaning to be given to it than that the Milky Way is the equatorial section [zodiac] of our whole visible firmaments, then the priority of the suggestion of the galactic stellar system belongs also to Swedenborg."

As regards the position of our solar system in space, Swedenborg says: "Our solar vortex or system is not in the axis of the sphere, but is near the axis where there is a considerable incurvation or inflection."<sup>3</sup> Sir. J. Herschel remarks: "Our system is placed eccentrically, so as to be much nearer to the parts about the cross, than to that diametrically opposed to it." "This confirms," says Mr Beswick, "the wonderful exactness of Swedenborg's statement." "In the year 1789," again he says, "Herschel directs his monster telescope to the sides and surfaces of the galaxy, and without

knowing of Swedenborg's announcement of the sun's position therein, conjectures the identical spot, seeks for evidence of its truth by a species of star gauging, and a few efforts reward his labours with the most abundant confirmation of the reality of his conjecture. Certainly, never did a more bold assertion receive a more striking confirmation."<sup>1</sup>

There is little space to speak of Swedenborg's anatomical studies, which were lifelong and profound. The value of his work was rather in his suggestive theorising on facts ascertained by others, than in original investigations, though Count Höpken says that "he made singular discoveries which are preserved somewhere in the *Acta Literaria*."<sup>2</sup>

Dr Wilkinson says of Swedenborg's anatomical and physiological works:

"Swedenborg's physiological doctrines are so new, deep, and comprehensive, that when presented to even a candid mind, full of ordinary notions, and breathing the gross atmosphere of modern science, they will probably appear to be little more than a confused mass of assumptions. Such is my experience of their first effect on my own mind. Now, however, I am every day becoming more penetrated with the truth and consequent importance of these works. . . . They are the results of rigid physical induction. And it is both curious and satisfactory to observe that medical authors have been for ages approximating, in the way of effects and details, to some of the principles elicited by Swedenborg. To instance one of these cases—the influence of the respiratory movements on, and their propagation to, the viscera and to the whole body. The law that the body in general and in particular, respire with the lungs

<sup>1</sup> See article referred to above, on "Swedenborg as a Scientist," in *New Church Review*, July 1894.

<sup>2</sup> *Principia*, Part III. chap. i. No. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Part III. chap. i. No. 7.

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of Swedenborg's astronomical theories, see *Swedenborg, as Philosopher*, etc., pp. 295-328.

<sup>2</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 408.

—that the perpetuation of all the functions, and, in a word, of corporeal life, depends on the universality of this action, as a law—is peculiar to Swedenborg. And yet, for centuries, the fragments of this truth have flitted across the mental vision of physiologists. *Glisson* has declared it of the liver—*Blumenbach*, of the spleen—*Barry*, and many others, of the heart—*Bell*, of the neck—*Schlichting*, of the blood in the brain—*Portal*, of the circulation in the spinal cord: and I could easily add many other names and instances to this list. Another principle discovered by Swedenborg is the permeability of membranes, and the circulation of fluids through them in determinate channels; some of the details of which are now grouped under the names ‘*Endosmosis*’ and ‘*Exosmosis*,’—two phenomena which are thought discoveries of the present day. With regard to the lymphatic system, Swedenborg has thoroughly anticipated the beautiful theory of *Dr Prout*, etc. And although it is as a discoverer of principles that Swedenborg is undoubtedly most valuable, yet his subordinate, theoretical details, are also far superior to those of other authors, because they refer themselves to a head, and derive from it a universalising vital essence.”<sup>1</sup>

Jacob Benzelius, “the father of modern chemistry,” wrote to Dr Wilkinson, of Swedenborg’s *Animal Kingdom*: “I have gone through some parts of *The Animal Kingdom*, which have interested me especially; and I have been surprised to find how the mind of Swedenborg has preceded the present state of knowledge, writing his work at the time he did. I hope the anatomists and physiologists of our day will profit by this work, both for the sake of extending their ideas, and of rendering justice

to the genius of Swedenborg.” In another letter he says, “I am surprised at the great knowledge displayed by Swedenborg in a subject that a professed metallurgist would not have been supposed to have made an object of study, and in which, as in all that he undertook, he was in advance of his age.” He was not only in advance of his age in science, but in the use he made of his knowledge; for his physiological studies were only undertaken as a basis for his profound psychological speculations. Coventry Patmore truly observes: “We have had only one psychologist and human physiologist, at least only one who has published his knowledge, for at least a thousand years, namely, Swedenborg.”

The great scheme of *The Animal Kingdom* was never completed, as we have already mentioned.<sup>1</sup> Among the material intended to be incorporated was a voluminous treatise on *The Brain*, which was translated into English and published in two volumes in 1882 and 1887. It is an encyclopædic work, and its value has been acknowledged in many quarters. Its editor, Dr R. L. Tafel, asserts that it contains many important discoveries and suggestions, some of which have been credited to more recent investigators. Dr Rabagliati, reviewing the work in *Brain*, vol. vi., describes it as “one of the most remarkable books we have ever seen.” “If it had not been,” he says, “that attention was arrested and interest enchained by finding so many anticipations of scientific discoveries by as much as one hundred and twenty or one hundred and thirty years, we should have been tempted to throw aside the book as beyond our province, if not hopelessly unintelligible.”

The modern student is at a loss to form a just estimate of Sweden-

<sup>1</sup> *Swedenborg, as a Philosopher*, etc., pp. 130 and 131.

<sup>1</sup> P. 33.

borg's scientific position from the fact that his philosophical works are to be found in few libraries, and have, most of them, been long out of print. The Swedenborg Society, however, is about to remedy this latter deficiency. At the present time the work of revision and preparation for the press is proceeding actively, and the *Principia* will be issued very shortly. The reappearance of these neglected works will doubtless arouse a new interest in their contents.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SWEDENBORG AS POLITICIAN

ANOTHER proof of the many-sidedness of Swedenborg's genius, and of the absolute sanity of his mind, is furnished by the brief records that exist of his political activity. From the time he first took his seat in the House of Nobles, in 1719, to the year 1761, he appears to have shown a warm interest in the public affairs of his native land; and, when at home, to have taken an active part in the proceedings of the Diet. A fellow-countryman writes of him: "Up to the time of his extreme old age he interested himself in the financial, administrative, and political affairs of his country, as well between, as during the sessions of the Swedish Diet. A considerable number of papers on these subjects, partly preserved to the present day, bear witness to his activity as the head of his family, and show how great an interest he had in the debates that took place in the House of Nobles. . . . As a member of the House of Nobles, Swedenborg belonged neither to the party of the 'hats,' nor to that of the 'caps,' in those times, but was an independent member, supporting whatever he saw to be worthy of his own position, and to be right and generally useful,

without allowing himself to be influenced either by the right or the left side. He, like every true friend of liberty, was opposed alike to despotism and to anarchy. As the son of a distinguished and universally beloved bishop, he was ennobled by Queen Ulrica Eleonora in 1719, together with his brothers and sisters. His entrance into the House of Nobles was consequently contemporaneous with the establishment of freedom in Sweden. During his childhood and youth he had witnessed the misfortunes into which an unlimited monarchy had precipitated his country. He himself had seen the misery and distress, which a war of eighteen years' duration, with dearly bought victories and bloody defeats, with decimated armies and bankrupt finances, attended by pestilence and famine, had entailed on his oppressed country. . . . Need we wonder, then, that Swedenborg was in favour of a constitution, which set bounds to the arbitrary power and whims of a hitherto unlimited monarchy; which prevented the dissolution of the country, and gradually changed discontent into satisfaction, at least among the majority of its citizens." <sup>1</sup>

Another Swedish writer says: "He conversed much on scientific and political subjects, and was especially much interested in the proceedings of the Diet of his country, even after he had ceased to take any part in them, and his judgment in these matters was always sure, quick, and to the point." <sup>2</sup>

Financial questions especially interested him, and he presented various memorials on currency, exchange, etc., between the years 1723 and 1761. Count Höpken states that:

<sup>1</sup> *Nya Kyrkan och dess inflytande på Theologiens Studium i Sverige*, Part II. p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Biographisk Tidskrift* (Upsala, 1820), p. 149.



"The most solid and best-written memorials at the Diet of 1761, on matters of finance, were presented by Swedenborg."<sup>1</sup>

No biography of Swedenborg could be regarded as complete without some notice of his political career. We shall therefore review briefly the various memorials of his that have been preserved. Of his speeches, we have no record, though he has been described as one of the sharpest and severest speakers in the house. This can scarcely be true, however, for two reasons: severity was not characteristic of the man, though he could be firm on occasion; and a slight impediment in his speech made public utterance a difficulty to him.

The earliest memorial that we have is dated 5th February 1723, and relates to the finances of the country. In it, Swedenborg deplores the decay of Swedish commerce, which has thrown the balance of trade from the credit to the debit side and so impoverished the state. The causes of the decline he attributes to the loss of many Swedish provinces in the wars, the absorption of capital by war expenditure, and the consequent dilapidation of Swedish ships "during the weary years of war." The remedies he proposes are the development of the internal resources of the country, especially the iron and copper industries; and the improvement of native manufactures that it might not be necessary to import so many articles of daily use.

Several memorials relate to the encouragement of iron manufactures in Sweden, but his efforts in this direction were not seconded by his colleagues at the Board of Mines—to whom some of the memorials were referred—and therefore came to nothing. An important memorandum advocating the establishment of

rolling mills in Sweden to deal with the crude product, which was accompanied by drawings of suitable machinery, was filed for future reference on 1st September 1726, and may still be seen in the Archives of the Board. In this paper he draws attention to the fact that—"Many thousand tons of Swedish pig-iron are annually shipped, with great expense in freight and custom-house duties, to Holland, whence it is re-shipped inland to Sauerland and Liège, where it is broken up, rolled, and converted into four, six, ten to twelve iron rods or bars, or converted into sheet-iron. Afterwards it is carried back to Holland, and conveyed thence to many places in Europe, where it is sold with great profit; so that our Swedish iron must in this manner be ennobled in Brabant, and yield them a handsome income, which we, with small expense and industry, might keep at home."

He shows that the establishment of such mills would give encouragement to various small manufactures in Sweden, and that the surplus production over and above home requirements might become an important item in the national exports. "The greater part of the rolled iron," he says, "which is sent out of Liège, consists of the iron of Liège and Brabant, which many nations are compelled to use for want of a better iron, although it is cold, short and brittle. But if Sweden would furnish the same sort of iron rods and sheeting, the inferior iron would be scorned and sink in price, while the better would rise."

In the year 1734 a war fever arose among the "hat" party in Sweden, who advocated an alliance with France against Russia, and the attempted reconquest of the Baltic provinces. Against this mad scheme Swedenborg strenuously protested by a lengthy memorial, in which he

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 408.

summed up in a masterly way the possible advantages and disadvantages of such a war and such an alliance. He pointed out the contracted means of Sweden for the carrying on of a great war, and the small number of men available for service, compared with former years; and emphasised the need of developing the material resources of the country, which would be of more importance to her than recovered territory. The possession of Dantzic by Russia threatened the trade of the Baltic, but he had the prescience to see that "naval and other powers in time will so arrange it, that Russia will not enjoy its possession perpetually." He was not opposed to a war of self-defence, but "putting oneself into training and commencing a war, simply for the purpose of showing that one is not afraid, even when this is feasible, is no proof or argument in the case of a nation that need not fear in any case to be attacked by its neighbours, and which is well known to be able to defend itself against those by whom it may be attacked." So he advocated neutrality as Sweden's proper attitude, and had the satisfaction of seeing his views adopted by the Diet.

The financial embarrassment of the country exercised his mind again in 1755, and in connection with it the question of intemperance, which was adding to the impoverishment of the people. "Intemperance, which prevailed in an alarming degree among his countrymen, he regarded as one of the worst internal foes of Sweden, preventing her from becoming a great manufacturing and agricultural nation. He was so much convinced of this, that he wrote on the fly-leaf of one of his theological MSS.: 'The immoderate use of spirituous liquors will be the downfall of the Swedish people.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, p. 493.

Among the remedies he proposed was that "all public-houses in town should be like baker's shops, with an opening in the window, through which those who desired might purchase whisky and brandy, without being allowed to enter the house, and lounge about in the tap-room." Another proposition, which was subsequently adopted by the Diet, was to limit the distillation of whisky, and to raise it in price by farming out the right of making it. "If the distilling of whisky," he said, "were farmed out in all judicial districts, and also in towns, to the highest bidder, a considerable revenue might be obtained for the country, and the consumption of grain might also be reduced: that is, if the consumption of whisky cannot be done away with altogether, which would be more desirable for the country's welfare and morality than all the income which could be realised from so pernicious a drink."

Another cause of the decreasing wealth of the country he found to be the facilities for raising loans on all fixed and movable property, whereby large numbers of all classes were deeply indebted to the bank. He proposed, in order to ease the financial situation, to call in the banknotes advanced on mortgaged property, to restore specie payments, and to farm out the distillation of whisky. In this latter project we have the germ of the Gothenburg system.

Five years later he returned to these subjects, and presented a lengthy memorial which displayed a confident knowledge of sound financial principles. He pointed out that the rise in exchange, which in twenty years had jumped from thirty-five marks to sixty-six marks for the rix-daler, was ruining the country, and suggested various remedies. He showed that the main cause of the rise was the displacement of a

metallic currency by paper money, issued by the bank in immense quantity against the mortgages spoken of above, and exceeding very much the capital of coined money possessed by the bank. The high rate of exchange was rapidly denuding the country of the ordinary currency, since "as soon as exchange rises above sixty marks . . . the copper contained in it is of more intrinsic value than the value represented by our paper currency," and so it went to the melting pot, or was sent abroad.

He argued strenuously for an honest currency as a cure for the evil; for, he said, "coin alone regulates exchange." "The currency in a country is like the blood in the body, upon which depends its life, health, strength, and defence." His proposals were "that the general loan upon all fixed and movable property do cease, and that henceforth no other loan be negotiated at any banking office, except for the purposes of the state, and upon gold and silver as was formerly the custom"; that the present mortgages should gradually be redeemed by the payment of a part of the loan annually in addition to the interest, and that thereafter "certificates of indebtedness" should cease to be legal tender; that the bank should increase its stock of "coin plates," which stood for bullion, and that, in the meantime, the exportation of "plates" or crude copper should be forbidden; that the number of the bank officials should be gradually reduced; and, finally (I have omitted some less important suggestions), that the distillation of whisky should be farmed out by the Government.

This memorial goes to the root of the matter, and evinces a remarkable grasp of a difficult question; the more remarkable when we remember that its author was at this time deeply engaged in spiritual studies,

and was the subject of much remark on account of his wonderful supernatural experiences, which had only lately become publicly known. The so-called mystic, or presumed madman, would have made an excellent chancellor of the exchequer, if Sweden had happened to want one just then.

Swedenborg followed up this weighty document with an "Appeal to the Houses of the Diet in favour of the Restoration of a Metallic Currency," some "Additional Considerations" on the Course of Exchange, and a memorial to the King on the subject of the exportation of copper. In the first of these papers he urges, that, "unless the various Houses of the Diet at the present session take steps to secure the return of the paper currency to the bank, and the issue of coin possessing an intrinsic value in its place, there is danger that the dearness of everything will continue to increase more and more, until the country at last will become utterly exhausted and ready to perish; which it assuredly will, unless another remedy for its restoration be found than a general bankruptcy on all the paper currency. This bankruptcy, however, stares every man willing to reflect upon this subject in the face, when he considers that six dalers in paper are now equivalent to three dalers in 'plates' in our foreign commerce, and two dalers in plates in our inland traffic." He concludes his appeal with these words of sober wisdom: "In coined specie itself lies the real value of exchange, and consequently that of all merchandise. If any country could exist by means of a paper currency, which is in the place of money, but which is not money, it would be a country without a parallel."

Swedenborg was offered a seat on the "Private Commission on Exchange," and would have been an



invaluable member, but he declined the honour as he was not satisfied with its constitution. His suggestions, however, carried weight with the Commissioners, and it was resolved, in January 1762, that no more money should be advanced on movable property. The following session a law was enacted limiting the circulation of paper money to the amount of bullion held by the bank.

The condition of Sweden at this time gave much concern to her responsible statesmen. The Councillor of Commerce, Anders Nordencrantz, issued a bulky work dealing with the financial difficulty, in which "he sounded a fearful alarm about the condition of the country, and made charges in general against judges, senators, and civil officers, and also proposed several radical changes which seemed necessary to him in the form of the government." To moderate the effect of this alarmist production, Swedenborg wrote a brief reply in the shape of a memorial to the Houses of the Diet; a statesman-like document well calculated to effect its purpose. In it he defends the Swedish form of government, as, together with that of England and Holland, the best in Europe, "as every inhabitant, notwithstanding all the shortcomings which happen there, is safe in his life and property, and no one is a slave, but they are all free men." He admits imperfections, "yet it is impossible," he says, "to escape all distortions of right, and all wrong interpretations of law, since most men are subject to human weaknesses, and hence are inclined to one of two parties either by friendship, relationship, hope of promotion, or of presents, and this malpractice cannot be uprooted under any government, however excellent it may be."

One of Nordencrantz's proposals was that "all state offices, high as well as low, except the ecclesiastical

and military, should be changed every second or third year"; to which Swedenborg advanced several weighty objections. Among other things, he foresaw that a state of affairs would arise such as we see in the United States at present. "What an amount of gifts and bribes," he remarks, "would have to be given and taken, in order that they might secure a livelihood for future time! From this the full absurdity of the proposal may be seen; yea, it appears almost at first sight from this consideration only, that it militates directly against an institution which has been established in Sweden from time immemorial, and which is likewise one of the pillars for the preservation of our freedom, inasmuch as everyone finds himself secure in his office during his lifetime, but insecure under an arbitrary government, and still more so in case such a proposal should be enacted."

Nordencrantz complained of corrupt practices among politicians. "In free governments," said Swedenborg, "it is impossible to prevent corrupt practices and power being exercised by cliques on the ground of such practices"; but "corrupt practices in free governments are like small ripples, compared with large waves in absolute monarchies; in absolute or arbitrary monarchies favourites and the favourites of favourites, yea the unlimited monarch himself, are corrupted by men studying and appealing to their passions. . . . One absolute or arbitrary monarch is able to do more mischief in one year, than a clique or combination of many at a session of the Diet could accomplish in a hundred years; inasmuch as in the various Houses of the Diet their influence is counterbalanced generally and individually; while in an absolute monarchy there is no such counter-weight."

Nordencrantz resented Sweden-

borg's criticism of his book and a somewhat acrimonious correspondence ensued;—acrimonious on the worthy Councillor's part, that is to say, for Swedenborg was courteous and dignified, as usual. This led to a breach between them, which was healed, however, by the intervention of the President of the Board of Commerce, Niklas von Oelreich, who wrote to Swedenborg on the last day of 1761: "Herr Norden-crantz, Councillor of Commerce, invites the Herr Assessor and myself to come to church to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, and afterwards to dine with him. He will send his carriage, and at the above-named time I shall call for the Herr Assessor with the carriage. I am very anxious that you two should become good friends."

The last political document that we have bearing Swedenborg's signature is an address to the Diet in favour of the reinstatement of three senators who had been compelled to resign on account of the part they had taken in the disastrous war against Frederick the Great. The memorial bears the title: "Frank Views concerning the Maintenance of the Country and the Preservation of its Freedom," and raises a warning voice against the revival of an absolute monarchy, which a party in the state was working to bring about, and which these senators had opposed. He was no believer in the Divine right of kings, as his father had been; "no one," he said, "has the right to leave his life and property in the absolute power of any individual; for of these God alone is master, and we are merely His stewards in this world." He had again the satisfaction of seeing his wishes carried out, as two at least of the senators were restored to their places.

Thus ends the record of Swedenborg's political acts. All the docu-

ments referred to, and some others of less consequence, display clear judgment, common-sense, and a sincere desire for the good of his native land. Their importance to us now is the evidence they afford of his mental condition at a time when he was supposed to be the subject of wild hallucinations.

## CHAPTER XV

### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

HAVING followed Swedenborg through his long and varied career, and briefly reviewed his principal works, let us now try to get a look at the man himself. Portraits, unfortunately, do not help us much; none of the existing ones are of high artistic merit, and, as likenesses, they give us little of the man's soul. The best, perhaps, is the one that forms the frontispiece of the *Opera Philosophica et Mineralia*, representing him at the age of forty-five. The face is pleasing and not unhandsome, alert with intelligence and full of conscious power; but somewhat prim and self-satisfied-looking. Cuno declares that this portrait, "although finished forty years ago by the skilful engraver Bernigroth, is still perfectly like him, especially in respect to the eyes, which have retained their beauty, even in his old age."<sup>1</sup>

These eyes were undoubtedly the most striking features of his countenance. Cuno says again: "When he gazed upon me with his smiling blue eyes, which he always did in conversing with me, it was as if truth itself was speaking from them."<sup>2</sup> They had a magnetic power, even with unsympathetic subjects; the same witness writes: "I often noticed with surprise how scoffers,

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 453.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 445.



who had made their way into large societies where I had taken him, and whose purpose it had been to make fun of the old gentleman, forgot all their laughter and their intended scoffing, and how they stood agape and listened to the most singular things which he like an open-hearted child told about the spiritual world without reserve and with full confidence. It almost seemed as if his eyes possessed the faculty of imposing silence on everyone."<sup>1</sup>

On taking leave of Cuno in 1769, the conversation turned upon the improbability of their meeting again. Swedenborg spoke with eager anticipation of the last great change which he knew must come to him before long; and, as he spoke, "he looked so innocent and so joyful out of his eyes, as I had never seen him look before. I did not interrupt him," said Cuno, "and was, as it were, dumb with astonishment." Other witnesses speak of his seraphic look at times, and of the general serenity of his countenance. "An inward serenity and complacency of mind," says the Rev. Thomas Hartley, "were manifest in the sweetness of his looks and outward demeanour."<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, when he had been in converse with spiritual beings, his eyes are said to have been filled with a wonderful light, which alarmed beholders; but under ordinary circumstances his appearance was placid and benignant.

In figure Swedenborg is described by most observers as tall, though it appears that he was not much above medium height. In his old age at any rate he was of spare habit, which doubtless added to his apparent stature. The Rev. Nicholas Collin, Rector of the Swedish Church in Philadelphia, who visited him in 1766, thus describes his personal

appearance: "Being very old when I saw him, he was thin and pale; but still retained traces of beauty, and had something very pleasing in his physiognomy, and a dignity in his tall and erect stature."<sup>1</sup> Gjörwell, the Royal Librarian in Stockholm, who had occasion to call upon him officially two years earlier, tells us: "Although he is an old man, and grey hair protruded in every direction from under his wig, he walked briskly, was fond of talking, and spoke with a certain cheerfulness. His countenance was indeed thin and meagre, but cheerful and smiling."<sup>2</sup>

Swedenborg's bodily activity in his later years was much remarked upon. Cuno wrote: "In respect to Mr Swedenborg's external appearance, he is for his years a perfect wonder of health. He is of middle stature, and although he is more than twenty years older than I am, I should be afraid to run a race with him; for he is as quick on his legs as the youngest man. When I dined with him the last time at Mr Odon's, he told me that a new set of teeth was growing in his mouth; and who has ever heard this of a man eighty-one years old?"<sup>3</sup>

In the course of his last journey abroad, in 1770, Swedenborg was delayed by contrary winds at Elsinore, where resided an early disciple of his, General Christian Tuxen. The latter boarded the ship to offer the hospitality of his house, and found Swedenborg *en déshabillé*. He proffered his invitation, to which "he [Swedenborg] immediately consented, pulling off his gown and slippers, putting on clean linen, and dressing himself as briskly and alertly as a young man of one and twenty."<sup>4</sup>

"The dress that he generally wore,

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 445 and 446.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Rev. John Clowes, *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 513.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 423.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 403.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 450.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 435.



when he went out to visit, was a suit of black velvet, made after an old fashion; a pair of long ruffles; a curious-hilted sword; and a gold-headed cane."<sup>1</sup> From a Swedish biography, we learn that "according to the custom of his times, Swedenborg wore the customary wig on his head, yet it was not too long; the rest of his body was usually covered by a long light blue or greyish velvet coat, with an undergarment of black taffeta, and stockings and shoes with large buckles of gold." Another account says: "His dress in winter consisted of a fur coat of reindeer skin, and in summer, of a dressing-gown, both well worn, as became a philosopher's wardrobe. His wearing apparel was simple, but neat. Still, it happened sometimes, that when he prepared to go out, and his people did not call his attention to it, something would be forgotten or neglected in his dress; so that, for instance, he would put one buckle of gems and another of silver in his shoes; an instance of which absence of mind I myself saw at my father's house, where he was invited to dine; and which occurrence greatly amused several young girls, who took occasion to laugh at the old gentleman."<sup>2</sup> His countryman, Eric Bergstrom, who kept the King's Arms' Tavern, in Wellclose Square, London, and sometimes entertained Swedenborg, tells us that "he usually walked out after breakfast, generally dressed neatly in velvet, and made a good appearance."<sup>3</sup>

Swedenborg's manners in society were easy, polished and agreeable. He was equally at home with high and low, dining not infrequently with royalty in his own country,

and living on friendly terms with his humble landlord in England. Cuno observes: "Mr Swedenborg moves in the world with great tact, and knows how to address the high as well as the low."<sup>1</sup> "He was not only," says Robsahm, "a learned man, but also a polished gentleman; for a man of such extensive learning, who, by his books, his travels, and his knowledge of languages, had acquired distinction both at home and abroad, could not fail to possess the manners and everything else which, in those so-called serious or sober times, caused a man to be honoured, and made him agreeable in society. He was accordingly, even in his old age, cheerful, sprightly, and agreeable in company; yet, at the same time, his countenance presented those uncommon features, which are only seen in men of great genius."<sup>2</sup>

Sandels tells us: "He was cheerful and pleasant in company, and as a recreation from his severe labours, he enjoyed intercourse with intelligent persons, by whom he was always well received and much respected. He could also properly meet, and playfully direct into another channel, the kind of curiosity which frequently desires to obtrude itself into the consideration of serious things."<sup>3</sup>

Owing to defective utterance, Swedenborg was not a brilliant conversationalist: nevertheless, "whenever he spoke, all other talk was hushed."<sup>4</sup> "Ordinarily he pronounced very distinctly; but he stuttered a little when he tried to speak quickly. . . . He was unwilling to enter into any disputes on matters of religion; and, if obliged to defend himself, he did it with

<sup>1</sup> Testimony collected by Henry Peckitt, Esq. *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 544.

<sup>2</sup> Robsahm's *Memoirs*. *Documents*, vol. i. pp. 33 and 34.

*Documents*, vol. ii. p. 537.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 448.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 43 and 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Robsahm, *Documents*, vol. i. p. 34.

gentleness, and in few words.”<sup>1</sup> “When he was contradicted, he kept silence.”<sup>2</sup> “He was a kind and sensible man,” testifies the Rev. Thomas Hartley, “and had something so loving and taking in his manner as highly delighted those he spoke with.”<sup>3</sup>

Swedenborg was fond of the society of ladies, and we have several charming pictures of his intercourse with them. On the occasion of his visit to General Tuxen, already referred to, the latter apologised that he had “no better company to amuse him than a sickly wife and her young girls. He replied, ‘And is not this very good company? I was always partial to ladies’ company.’” “He entertained them very politely and with much attention (this old man of eighty-two) on indifferent subjects,” and seeing a harpsichord in the room, asked if they were fond of music. The daughter was persuaded to play, and Swedenborg listened appreciatively, beating time with his foot, and exclaiming when she ceased: “Brava! you play very well. Do you not sing also?” Both mother and daughter sang some French and Italian airs and duets, to which also he beat time, afterwards complimenting Madame Tuxen on her tasteful singing and her fine voice, which she had preserved in spite of long illness.<sup>4</sup>

Cuno once took Swedenborg to dine at a friend’s house, where he met several highly educated ladies. “His deportment was exquisitely refined and gallant. When dinner was announced, I offered my hand to the hostess, and quickly our young man of eighty-one years had put on his gloves, and presented his

hand to Mademoiselle Hoog, in doing which he looked uncommonly well. . . . Our old gentleman was seated between Madame Konauw and the elder Demoiselle Hoog, both of whom understood thoroughly well how to talk. . . . He seemed to enjoy very much to be so attentively served by the ladies.”<sup>1</sup>

Swedenborg, as we have said, was never married, “but,” says Sandels, “this was not owing to any indifference to the sex; for he esteemed the company of a fine and intelligent woman as one of the purest sources of delight; but his profound studies required that in his house there should be perfect stillness both day and night. He, therefore, preferred being alone.”<sup>2</sup>

Though there was no prattle of children in his house, he often sought their company outside. Himself childlike in manner, he delighted in the society of the young and innocent. His landlady in Amsterdam remarked to Cuno: “My children will miss him most; for he never goes out without bringing them home sweets; the little rogues also dote upon the old gentleman so much, that they prefer him to their own parents.”<sup>3</sup>

Swedenborg lodged on several occasions in the neighbourhood of Cold Bath Fields, Clerkenwell. “The area of the square has long been filled with houses, but, in those days, was a green, whither children used to resort in their play hours, and where the aged theologian would often join them, to distribute gingerbread among them.”<sup>4</sup>

A Mr Hart of Poppin’s Court, Fleet Street, was Swedenborg’s printer for many years and often received the great man at his house.

<sup>1</sup> Abbé Pernety, *Documents*, vol. i. p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Johan Knös, *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 564.

<sup>3</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 539 and 540.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 437 and 438.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 449.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 446.

<sup>4</sup> *Memoirs of William Cookworthy*, by his Grandson, p. 57.

"He used to take particular notice of Mr Hart's little girl," a child of about three years old at the time of his (Swedenborg's) death. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," wrote Wordsworth; and Swedenborg had expressed the same thought many years before. Their heavenly associates doubtless drew him towards the young.

A pretty story is told by Anders Fryxell, the Swedish historian, of a bit of pleasantry on the part of Swedenborg with a child of somewhat larger growth. "My grandmother, Sara Greta Askbom," he says, "who was married to Anders Ekman, councillor of commerce and burgo-master, had grown up in the neighbourhood of Björngårdsgatan in the Södermalm, where her father lived not far from Swedenborg, with whom he had frequent intercourse. The pretty maiden, only fifteen or sixteen years old, had often asked 'Uncle' Swedenborg to show her a spirit or an angel. At last he consented, and leading her to a summer-house in his garden, he placed her before a curtain that had been lowered, and then said, 'Now you shall see an angel'; and as he spoke, he drew up the curtain, when the maiden beheld herself reflected in a mirror."<sup>1</sup>

Of Swedenborg's personal habits we have many particulars. He was most temperate in eating and drinking, seldom touching flesh meat, and never taking more than two or three glasses of wine at a time, and this only in company. "When not invited out," says Robsahm, "his dinner consisted of nothing but a roll soaked in boiled milk; and this was his meal always when he dined at home."<sup>2</sup> He doubtless accommodated himself to circumstances when travelling, for Cuno tells us: "Chocolate and biscuits served in his own room usually constituted his

dinner; and of this his landlord, his landlady, and the children generally received the greater part." If he had a better appetite he went into a neighbouring restaurant in the so-called "Holyway."<sup>3</sup> He told General Tuxen in 1770, that for twelve years past he had scarcely taken any other food than coffee and biscuits, as in his old age he was afflicted with a weak stomach.<sup>2</sup> Of coffee he was very fond and took it at all hours of the night and day, well sweetened with sugar. He was also much addicted to snuff.

His habits of sleep were extraordinary. "He worked without much regard to the distinction of day and night, having no fixed time for labour or rest. 'When I am sleepy,' he said, 'I go to bed.'"<sup>3</sup> Often he slept for as much as thirteen hours at a stretch, and when in a trance condition would sometimes lie in bed for several days without eating. Not long before his death, "he lay some weeks in a trance, without any sustenance; and came to himself again."<sup>4</sup> At such times he desired to be left alone, telling his landlord not to be troubled, as all would be well.

The Abbé Pernety tells us that our author was "an indefatigable man who worked day and night"; and Cuno writes: "He labours in a most astonishing and superhuman manner at his new work. Sixteen sheets, in type twice as small as those used in his former works, are already printed. Only think! for every printed sheet he has to fill four sheets in manuscript. He now has two sheets printed every week. These he corrects himself; and consequently he has to write eight sheets every week."<sup>5</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 447.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 435.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 545.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 482.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 725.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 32.



was written on the 26th January 1771, when Swedenborg was within three days of completing his eighty-third year! Counsellor Sandels exclaims: "I cannot help being filled with astonishment, in reflecting upon his extraordinary industry";<sup>1</sup> and when we remember that, in addition to nearly thirty considerable volumes and many smaller works that he published himself, he left an enormous quantity of unpublished MS. behind him, probably equal in amount to what he had printed, we may well be astonished also, and can readily accept his uncle's (Bishop Benzelius) statement that he was "most economical with his time."

With this enormous productiveness, Swedenborg's work was neither loose nor careless. Some of his more important works went through several drafts before they appeared in final form, and others were abandoned altogether because he was not satisfied with the result of his labours. The Rev. Arvid Ferelius, who examined Swedenborg's later manuscripts, tells us "they were all written out in a clear hand, without his having first made a rough draft. Nowhere could a single word be found crossed out; but all that was once written, remained written, just as if it had been dictated."<sup>2</sup> This remark would probably not apply to his earlier works, written from his own unaided reason.

Several witnesses testify that in later years Swedenborg used no aids in his work beyond the Bible and his own carefully prepared indices. "Although he was a learned man," says Robsahm, "no books were ever seen in his room, except his Hebrew and Greek Bible and his manuscript indexes to his own works, by which, in making quotations, he was saved the trouble of examining all that he

had previously written or printed."<sup>1</sup> White<sup>2</sup> gives a list of four different editions of the Hebrew Bible that Swedenborg possessed. The one from which he habitually worked, and which he took with him on his travels, was Sebastian Schmidius' edition with Latin translation, published at Leipsic, in 1740. This, which was underscored everywhere, he left, at his death, to the pastor of the Swedish church in London, the Rev. Arvid Ferelius. Richard Shearsmith, with whom Swedenborg stayed in London, also asserts that "he had no books, no, not so much as a Directory."<sup>3</sup>

Swedenborg, for many years, published his theological works anonymously, and derived no benefit from their sale. His London publisher, John Lewis, of Paternoster Row, wrote, in the advertisement of the second volume of the *Arcana Cælestia*, "I do aver that this gentleman, with indefatigable pains and labour, spent one whole year in studying and writing the first volume of *Arcana Cælestia*, was at the expense of two hundred pounds to print it, and also advanced two hundred pounds more for the printing of this second volume; and when he had done this, he gave express orders that all the money that should arise in the sale of this large work should be given towards the charge of the propagation of the gospel. He is so far from desiring to make a gain of his labours, that he will not receive one farthing back of the four hundred pounds he has expended; and for that reason his works will come exceedingly cheap to the public."<sup>4</sup>

According to Cuno, the public did not always get his works "exceedingly cheap," but this was not the

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii. p. 343.

<sup>3</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 554.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 494 and 495.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 564.

author's fault. "He has published his manifold writings in England and in this country [Holland] entirely at his own expense; and has never gained a farthing from their sale. All these writings are printed on large and expensive paper; and yet he gives them all away. The booksellers to whom he gives them for sale charge as much for them as they can get. Indeed, they sell them dear enough, as I found out by my own experience; for I had to pay four florins and a half to the bookseller Schreuder in this town for a copy of his *Apocalypsis Revelata*. The bookseller himself, however, mentioned to me that the author never demands an account either from himself, or any other dealer." <sup>1</sup>

Another little incident in connection with his publishing transactions is worth mentioning, as witnessing to his absolute truthfulness. He desired to publish his *True Christian Religion* in Paris, and submitted it to the Press Censor for his approval. Consent was given with the proviso that the title-page should declare, "as was usual," that the book was printed either in London or Amsterdam. This was not Swedenborg's way of doing things, however: so he took his MS. to Amsterdam and issued the book with an honest imprint. Most of his theological works were published in England or Holland, because in those countries "he had full liberty accorded to him to print whatever he liked; which liberty would never have been granted to him in his native town, and probably nowhere else in Christendom." <sup>2</sup>

Something must be said about Swedenborg's home. It was situated in the Södermalm, a suburb of Stockholm, and was a modest struc-

ture of wood, built to suit his own convenience. Attached to it was a large garden (the whole property occupied nearly 6000 square yards), in which were several other structures, summer-houses, an aviary, a maze, etc. One of the summer-houses was fitted up as a study, an inner room containing the owner's library; the others were furnished with movable screens, mirrors, etc., for the amusement of visitors. There was a flower garden, with curiously cut box-trees, in the Dutch manner; and an extensive kitchen garden containing choice fruit-trees, and some large and splendid limes. The whole produce of this garden, beyond his own modest requirements, Swedenborg made over to his gardener, who, with his wife, composed his whole retinue.

In the flower garden Swedenborg took a personal interest, making its care a recreation from his serious labours. A Swedish biographer tells us that "with his pious childlike mind he especially attached himself to Flora's variegated and beautifully coloured children. I had occasion to see one of Swedenborg's almanacs for the year 1750, where with the same preciseness, as if it had been the beginning or close of some profound treatise, he marked down when he had planted an auricula or a pink, the time when they bloomed, how much seed he had gathered of them, and so forth." In his correspondence with Joachim Wretman of Amsterdam we find several references to the purchase of rare plants and seeds, box-trees, etc. When Gjörwell, the Royal Librarian, called on him in 1764 to request copies of his lately published books, he found him in his garden, "where he was engaged in attending his plants, attired in a simple garment. . . . Without knowing me, or the nature of my errand, he said, smiling, 'Perhaps you would like to take a walk in the

*Documents*, vol. ii. p. 446.

<sup>1</sup> John Christian Cuno, *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 147.

garden,'”<sup>1</sup> thinking probably he was an ordinary visitor, as his garden was open to the public.

It would be impossible to imagine a more simple and unworldly man than Swedenborg. Though he had ample means he did not spend them on himself, and was content with the barest necessities of life. He was so trustful of others that he would send his landlord to a drawer in which he kept money, to help himself to what he needed. At his death he left no will, and little property.

In his later years he always travelled alone. He told Cuno that he had no need of an attendant as his angel was always with him. Wherever he went he was beloved, and people said that he brought them good fortune. Even sea captains averred that they always had prosperous voyages when he was on board. One of them is declared to have said: “If Swedenborg chooses, he can always have a free passage with me; for during the whole of my experience at sea, I have never sailed better.”<sup>2</sup> Shearsmith, with whom Swedenborg lodged latterly in London, remarked that “everything went on prosperously with him, while Swedenborg lodged at his house”; and Mrs Shearsmith told Mr Peckitt that “he was a blessing to the house, for that they had harmony and good business while he was with them.”<sup>3</sup>

For some years Swedenborg seldom went to church, on which account his friends sometimes remonstrated with him, and his enemies pointed the finger of scorn at him. The reasons Robsahm assigned for his omission were that “he could not be edified by preaching which was so different from his own revelations, and partly because he suffered from

the stone.”<sup>1</sup> Swedenborg told Ferelius that “he had no peace in the church on account of the spirits who contradicted what the minister said, especially when he treated of three persons in the Godhead, which is the same as three gods.”<sup>2</sup> Some Sabbatarian observed to Shearsmith that Swedenborg could not be considered a good Christian because he did not observe the Sabbath; “to which Mr Shearsmith replied that ‘to a good man like Swedenborg every day of his life was a Sabbath.’”<sup>3</sup>

Swedenborg was peculiarly regardless of times and seasons. He turned night into day, and day into night, as we observed above, and did not trouble himself about the day of the week. On one occasion he called for his landlord and asked him to have his carpet shaken, as it was covered with snuff. Shearsmith reminded that it was Sunday, a fact of which he seemed quite oblivious; he replied to the remonstrance with, “Dat be good,” in his broken English, and allowed the matter to rest.

In order to throw contempt upon his theological teachings, unscrupulous persons have endeavoured to establish the idea that Swedenborg's mental capacity gave way in middle life. There is not a shred of evidence of either bodily or mental failure until within a few weeks of his death, except that once he suffered from fever, with the usual accompaniment of delirium. “He enjoyed,” says Sandels, “a most excellent state of bodily health, having scarcely ever been indisposed.” The records of the College of Mines show that his attendance was regular when he was at home, except for occasional brief

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 560.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 549. See also Appendix, “Swedenborg and his Gardener Folks.”

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 402.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 546 and 548.



illnesses, probably colds and such like. He constantly travelled alone, even on his last journey, which he commenced in his eighty-third year.

The closing scenes of Swedenborg's life are in keeping with its peaceful tenor throughout. He had no fear of death, but rather joyful anticipation. "If," he said to Cuno, "anyone is conjoined with the Lord, he has a foretaste of the eternal life in this world; and if he has this, he no longer cares so much about this transitory life. Believe me, if I knew that the Lord would call me to Himself to-morrow, I would summon the musicians to-day, in order to be once more really gay in this world."<sup>1</sup> Some time before his death he foretold the date to his landlady and the maidservant who waited on him; and, the latter remarked, he seemed as pleased at the prospect "as if he was going to have a holiday, to go to some merry-making."<sup>2</sup> This was no affectation of prospective delight, nor was he weary of his natural life; for, "as he was always content with himself and with his circumstances, he spent a life which was, in every respect, happy, nay, which was happy in the very highest degree."<sup>3</sup>

It was shortly before Christmas, 1771, that the messenger of death first appeared at the humble lodging in Cold Bath Fields. A paralytic

stroke laid the old philosopher low, depriving him of speech and of the use of one arm. He lay in a lethargic state for upwards of three weeks, during the whole of which time he took no sustenance whatever, except a little tea without milk, and cold water occasionally; and once, about two teaspoonfuls of red-currant jelly. At the end of that time he recovered his speech and health a little, and ate and drank toast, tea, and coffee as usual; he also was able to see friends at times. Among these was Peter Provo, a medical man, to whom he remarked, shortly before his death, that "as it had pleased God to take away the use of his arm by a palsy, his body was now good for nothing but to be put into the ground."<sup>1</sup>

After this partial recovery, he continued in possession of all his faculties to the last hour of his life. A few days before the end, he received the sacrament from the hands of Pastor Ferelius, but at the last he had no one with him but his devoted landlady and her equally devoted servant. None, that is, of earthly company; but, he told the Rev. Thomas Hartley, he was comforted in his last illness by his angelic friends. According to the most particular account that we have, that of Mr and Mrs Shearsmith, it was about five o'clock (? P.M.) on Sunday, the 29th of March 1772, the day he had foretold for his departure, that he suddenly asked his attendants the time and, when informed, remarked: "Dat be good [a favourite expression of his], me tank you, God bless you." These were his last words, for in about ten minutes' time "he heaved a gentle sigh, and expired in the most tranquil manner."<sup>2</sup>

Thus ended the earthly life of this illustrious man, a life, which for

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 454.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 546.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 29.

In his *Spiritual Diary* (20th October 1748) Swedenborg wrote: "Some think that they who are in the faith should remove from themselves all the delights of life, and all the pleasures of the body: but this I can assert, that delights and pleasures have never been denied to me; for I have been permitted to enjoy not only the pleasures of the body and the senses, like those who live (in the world), but I have also been permitted to enjoy such delights and felicities of life, as, I believe, no persons in the whole world ever before enjoyed, which were greater and more exquisite than any person could imagine and believe."

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 538.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 578.

purity, nobility of aim, and disinterested usefulness, could scarcely be paralleled. With all the kingdoms of the intellectual world before him, he chose the path of service and of obscurity, troubling little that the praise of the multitude was denied to him, and quite content at the last to accept the ministrations of a humble wigmaker's wife and her maid-of-all-work.

## CHAPTER XVI

### SIGNS OF SEERSHIP

HAD Swedenborg possessed the nature of a charlatan, he might have made both wealth and fame by the exhibition of his extraordinary powers; but far from making a public show of these, he seldom referred to them unless occasion called for it, and refused to confirm his mission by such means. Prelate Cœtinger wrote: "That Swedenborg has knowledge of hidden occurrences has been proved by a few well-attested instances, but he is indisposed to avail himself of them to procure assent and credibility to his writings."<sup>1</sup> Even when appealed to by anxious persons for information about their deceased friends,—though the persons concerned might be members of Royal houses,—he kindly but firmly declined to satisfy them, unless there was some special reason for his doing so. The Rev. Nicholas Collin begged him, as a great favour, to procure him an interview with his brother, who had died a few months before; "he answered," Collin tells us, "that God having for wise and good purposes separated the world of spirits from ours, a communication is never granted without cogent reasons;

and asked what my motives were. I confessed that I had none besides gratifying brotherly affection, and an ardent wish to explore scenes so sublime and interesting to a serious mind. He replied, that my motives were good, but not sufficient; that if any important spiritual or temporal concern of mine had been the case, he would then have solicited permission from those angels who regulate such matters."<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding this reticence on his part, there are many well-authenticated records of remarkable revelations made to different persons in the course of his life. Marvellous as they appear, he did not regard them as in any way miraculous, but simply as signs of the reality of his intercourse with the spiritual world. "These must by no means," he said, "be regarded as miracles; for they are simply testimonies that I have been introduced by the Lord into the spiritual world, and have intercourse and converse there with angels and spirits; in order that the church, which has hitherto remained in ignorance concerning that world, may know that heaven and hell really exist, and that man lives after death a man, as before; and that thus no more doubts may flow into his mind in respect to his immortality."<sup>2</sup> In affirming the truth of two of these occurrences to Cuno, "he did not dwell long upon them, observing that there were hundreds of similar stories; but he did not think it worth while to waste many words upon them; saying that all these things were trifles placing in

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 422; see also vol. ii. pp. 695 and 696. With reference to the last sentence in above account, Mr Collin must have misunderstood Swedenborg, as the latter teaches that such matters are under the control of the Lord alone, and not of any angel or spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Letters to Venator, *Documents*, vol. i. p. 390.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 1051.

the shade the great object of his mission." <sup>1</sup>

For us to dwell unduly upon these extraordinary occurrences would be to show small respect to our author's own wishes ; nevertheless, as genuine testimonies to his seership, we must allow the following due weight.

Jung-Stilling asserts that "three proofs that he had actual intercourse with spirits are generally known concerning him." These are the stories of his disclosing to the Queen of Sweden the nature of a secret that had existed between her deceased brother, the Crown Prince Augustus William of Prussia, and herself ; his description of a destructive fire in Stockholm, while he himself was at Gothenburg ; and his revealing to the widow of M. de Marteville, formerly Dutch Ambassador at Stockholm, the hiding-place of a missing receipt for money paid by her late husband. The stories have been related by different witnesses, with some variations as was to be expected, but of their substantial accuracy there can be no question. The story of Queen Louisa Ulrica naturally excited most notice, and for that reason, perhaps, presents most variants. We are told that it "was much talked of in Stockholm and abroad, and every man dressed it up to suit himself." <sup>2</sup> This is Count Hönken's account :

"Swedenborg was one day at a court reception. Her Majesty asked him about different things in the other life, and lastly whether he had seen, or had talked with, her brother, the Prince Royal of Prussia. He answered, No. Her Majesty then requested him to ask after him, and to give him her greeting, which Swedenborg promised to do. I doubt whether the Queen meant anything serious by it. At the next reception Swedenborg again appeared

at court ; and while the Queen was in the so-called white room, surrounded by her ladies of honour, he came boldly in, and approached Her Majesty, who no longer remembered the commission she had given him a week before. Swedenborg not only greeted her from her brother, but also gave her his [her brother's] apologies for not having answered her last letter ; he also wished to do so now through Swedenborg ; which he accordingly did. The Queen was greatly overcome, and said, 'No one except God, knows this secret.'

"The reason why she never adverted to this before was that she did not wish anyone in Sweden to believe that during a war with Prussia she had carried on a correspondence in the enemy's country." <sup>1</sup>

Another account says that the Queen nearly fainted, and that Count von Schwerin seeing her distress, bitterly reproached Swedenborg for his conduct, at the same time endeavouring to elicit from him the nature of his secret. The incident soon got wind, and many were anxious to know the truth of matters. "The wife of Swedenborg's gardener," says C. F. Nordensköld, "related to us that for days following the occurrence carriages stopped before the door of her master, from which the first gentlemen of the kingdom alighted, who desired to know the secret of which the Queen was so much frightened, but her master, faithful to his promise, refused to tell it." <sup>2</sup> Jung-Stilling writes : "This occurrence has been questioned in the public papers, but a distinguished Swede, who was by no means an admirer of Swedenborg, has assured me that it is the pure truth, and cannot be called in question. He furnished me with some additional proofs, but which I hesitate to make known, because, as

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 648.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 663.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 660.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 655.



is usually the case with stories that deal with the realm of spirits, some are thereby compromised who ought to be spared."<sup>1</sup> In Stockholm, we are told, the story was "universally believed."

The most particular account of the Stockholm fire is contained in a letter of Immanuel Kant's to Charlotte von Knobloch, dated Königsberg, 10th August 1758.<sup>2</sup> He writes:

"The following occurrence appears to me to have the greatest weight of proof, and to place the assertion respecting Swedenborg's extraordinary gift beyond all possibility of doubt. In the year 1759, towards the end of September,<sup>3</sup> on Saturday, at four o'clock P.M., Swedenborg arrived at Gothenburg from England, when Mr William Castel invited him to his house, together with a party of fifteen persons. About six o'clock, Swedenborg went out, and returned to the company quite pale and alarmed. He said that a dangerous fire had just broken out in Stockholm, at the Södermalm [Gothenburg is about 50 German miles—about 300 English—from Stockholm], and that it was spreading very fast. He was restless and went out often. He said that the house of one of his friends, whom he named, was already in ashes, and that his own was in danger. At eight o'clock, after he had been out again, he joyfully exclaimed, 'Thank God! the fire is extinguished, the third door from my house.' The news occasioned great commotion throughout the whole city, but particularly amongst the company in

which he was. It was announced to the governor the same evening. On Sunday morning, Swedenborg was summoned to the governor, who questioned him concerning the disaster. Swedenborg described the fire precisely, how it had begun, and in what manner it had ceased, and how long it had continued. On the same day the news spread through the city, and as the governor had thought it worthy of attention, the consternation was considerably increased; because many were in trouble on account of their friends and property, which might have been involved in the disaster. On Monday evening a messenger arrived at Gothenburg, who was despatched by the Board of Trade during the time of the fire. In the letters brought by him, the fire was described precisely in the manner stated by Swedenborg. On Tuesday morning the royal courier arrived at the governor's, with the melancholy intelligence of the fire, of the loss which it had occasioned, and of the houses it had damaged and ruined, not in the least differing from that which Swedenborg had given at the very time when it happened; for the fire was extinguished at eight o'clock."

Of the many versions of the Marteville incident given by Dr R. L. Tafel in the *Documents*, I select again Kant's account as narrated by him to Charlotte von Knobloch, from information received from a friend whom, as we shall see presently, he commissioned to investigate the matter on the spot.

"Madame Harteville [Marteville], the widow of the Dutch ambassador in Stockholm, some time after the death of her husband, was called upon by Croon, a goldsmith, to pay for a silver service which her husband had purchased from him. The widow was convinced that her late husband had been much too precise

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 659.

<sup>2</sup> Dr Tafel has shown conclusively that the date of this letter, as also of the events mentioned in it, have been falsified. It could not possibly have been written in 1758 (see *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 616 *et seq.*). The correct year of the conflagration is given here.

<sup>3</sup> This date must also be erroneous, as the fire occurred on the 29th of July.

and orderly not to have paid this debt, yet she was unable to find the receipt. In her sorrow, and because the amount was considerable, she requested Mr Swedenborg to call at her house. After apologising to him for troubling him, she said that if, as all people say, he possessed the extraordinary gift of conversing with the souls of the departed, he would perhaps have the kindness to ask her husband how it was about the silver service. Swedenborg did not at all object to comply with her request. Three days afterwards the said lady had company at her house for coffee. Swedenborg called, and in his cool way informed her that he had conversed with her husband. The debt had been paid seven months before his decease, and the receipt was in a bureau in the room upstairs. The lady replied that the bureau had been quite cleared out, and that the receipt was not found among all the papers. Swedenborg said that her husband had described to him, how after pulling out the left-hand drawer a board would appear, which required to be drawn out, when a secret compartment would be disclosed, containing his private Dutch correspondence, as well as the receipt. Upon hearing this description the whole company rose and accompanied the lady into the room upstairs. The bureau was opened; they did as they were directed; the compartment was found, of which no one had ever known before; and, to the great astonishment of all, the papers were discovered there, in accordance with his description." <sup>1</sup>

Kant's interest in these stories arose through his friendship with Madame von Knobloch, who appealed to his judgment in the matter of Swedenborg's seership. To oblige his friend he instituted searching inquiries into the alleged occurrences, the result of which he communicated

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 635 and 636.

in the letter referred to above. This letter appears in the original in Borowsky's *Life of Kant*, published at Königsberg in 1804; and an English translation is embodied in Dr R. L. Tafel's *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 625-628.

In fully confirming the truth of these stories, Kant is careful to guard himself against the charge of credulity. "I am not aware," he says, "that anybody has ever perceived in me an inclination to the marvellous, or a weakness tending to credulity. So much is certain, that, notwithstanding all the narrations of apparitions and visions concerning the spiritual world, of which a great number of the most probable are known to me, I have always considered it to be most in agreement with the rule of sound reason to incline to the negative side. . . . This is the position in which my mind stood for a long time, until the report concerning Swedenborg came to my notice.

"This account I received from a Danish officer, who was formerly my friend, and attended my lectures; and who, at the table of the Austrian ambassador, Dietrichstein, at Copenhagen, together with several other guests, read a letter which the ambassador about that time had received from Baron de Lutzow, the Mecklenburg ambassador in Stockholm; in which he says that he, in company with the Dutch ambassador, was present, at the Queen of Sweden's residence, at the extraordinary transaction respecting Swedenborg, which your ladyship will undoubtedly have heard. The authenticity thus given to the account surprised me. For it can scarcely be believed that one ambassador should communicate to another for public use a piece of information, which related to the queen of the court where he resided, and which he himself, together with



a distinguished company, had the opportunity of witnessing, if it were not true. Now in order not to reject blindfold the prejudice against apparitions and visions by a new prejudice, I found it desirable to inform myself as to the particulars of this surprising transaction. I accordingly wrote to the officer I have mentioned, at Copenhagen, and made various inquiries respecting it. He answered that he had again had an interview concerning it with Count Dietrichstein; that the affair had really taken place in the manner described; and that Professor Schlegel, also, had declared to him that it could by no means be doubted."

Not satisfied with this, Kant wrote to Swedenborg himself, and, failing to receive an answer, commissioned an English friend, who was going to Stockholm, to make full inquiries. This friend did not succeed in seeing Swedenborg for some time, but he wrote: "The most respectable people in Stockholm declare that the singular transaction alluded to [the message to the Queen] happened in the manner you have heard described by me." When, at length, he had made the acquaintance of Swedenborg, "his succeeding letters were quite of a different purport. [He had previously expressed his own incredulity in regard to the alleged facts.] He had not only spoken with Swedenborg himself, but had also visited him at his house; and he is now in the greatest astonishment respecting such a remarkable case. Swedenborg is a reasonable, polite, and open-hearted man: he also is a man of learning. . . . He told this gentleman, without reserve, that God had accorded to him the remarkable gift of communicating with departed souls at his pleasure. In proof of this, he appealed to certain well-known facts."

After some further observations, Kant narrates the stories of the fire and the lost receipt, as given above, and concludes: "What can be brought forward against the authenticity of this occurrence [the conflagration in Stockholm]? My friend who wrote this to me has examined all, not only in Stockholm, but also, about two months ago, in Gothenburg, where he is well acquainted with the most respectable houses, and where he could obtain the most authentic and complete information, for, as only a very short time has elapsed since 1750, most of the inhabitants are still alive who were eye-witnesses of this occurrence."

We may take it that the authenticity of these three stories is established beyond the possibility of doubt. There are numerous similar ones, not so widely known and testified to, some of which, however, are of sufficient interest to be quoted here. One of the most remarkable relates to John Wesley, and is given in most detail in a letter from Mr John Isaac Hawkins, a well-known engineer and inventor, to the Rev. Samuel Noble. An extract from this letter, which is dated 6th February 1826, is given below.

"In answer to your inquiries, I am able to state that I have a clear recollection of having repeatedly heard the Rev. Samuel Smith [one of Wesley's preachers] say, about the year 1787 or 1788, that in the latter end of February, 1772, he, with some other preachers, was in attendance upon the Rev. John Wesley, taking instructions and assisting him in the preparations for his great circuit, which Mr Wesley was about to commence; that while there in attendance, a letter came to Mr Wesley, which he perused with evident astonishment; that, after a pause, he read the letter to the company; and that it was couched in nearly the following words:—



"GREAT BATH STREET,  
COLD BATH FIELDS,  
Feb. —, 1772.

"SIR,—I have been informed in the world of spirits that you have a strong desire to converse with me; I shall be happy to see you if you will favour me with a visit.

"I am, sir, your humble servant,  
"EMAN. SWEDENBORG."

"Mr Wesley frankly acknowledged to the company that he had been very strongly impressed with a desire to see and converse with Swedenborg, and that he had never mentioned that desire to anyone.

"Mr Wesley wrote for answer that he was then closely occupied in preparing for a six months' journey, but would do himself the pleasure of waiting upon Mr Swedenborg soon after his return to London.

"Mr Smith further informed me that he afterwards learned that Swedenborg wrote in reply that the visit proposed by Mr Wesley would be too late, as he, Swedenborg, should go into the world of spirits on the 29th day of the next month, never more to return."<sup>1</sup>

Dr Tafel adduces confirmatory evidence of the truth of this story from several other witnesses.

Wesley was not the only person to whom Swedenborg announced the date of his death. The people with whom he lived, Mr and Mrs Shearsmith, both testified that he foretold the day he should leave this world some time before the end came. He also predicted the deaths of others; if we accept some of the stories that have come down to us. Here is one which is attributed to Dr Scherer, professor of French and English at Tübingen in the early part of last century.

"Swedenborg was one morning in company in Stockholm, when, after

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 565.

his information about the world of spirits had been heard with the greatest attention, they put him to the proof as to the credibility of his extraordinary spiritual communications. The test was this:—'He should state which of the company would die first.' Swedenborg did not refuse to answer this question, but after some time, in which he appeared to be in profound and silent meditation, he quite openly replied,—'Olof Olofsohn will die to-morrow morning at forty-five minutes past four o'clock.' By this predictive declaration, which was pronounced by Swedenborg with all confidence, the company were placed in anxious expectation, and a gentleman who was a friend of Olof Olofsohn, resolved to go on the following morning, at the time mentioned by Swedenborg, to the house of Olofsohn, to see whether Swedenborg's prediction was fulfilled. On the way thither he met the well-known servant of Olofsohn, who told him that his master had just died; a fit of apoplexy had seized him, and had suddenly put an end to his life. Upon which the gentleman, through the evidence of the death which really occurred (according to the prediction) was convinced. At the same time this particular circumstance also attracted attention;—the clock in Olofsohn's dwelling apartment stopped at the very minute in which he had expired, and the hand pointed to the time."<sup>1</sup>

In his memorandum-book for 1809 Jung-Stilling records the following story, on the testimony of a "certain beloved friend."

"In the year 1762, on the very day when the Emperor Peter III. of Russia died, Swedenborg was present with me at a party in Amsterdam. In the middle of the conversation, his physiognomy became

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 716 and 717.

changed, and it was evident that his soul was no longer present in him, and that something was taking place with him. As soon as he recovered, he was asked what had happened? At first he would not speak out, but after being repeatedly urged, he said, 'Now, at this very hour the Emperor Peter III. has died in prison,' explaining the nature of his death. 'Gentlemen, will you please to make note of this day, in order that you may compare it with the announcement of his death, which will appear in the newspapers?' The papers soon after announced the death of the Emperor, which had taken place on the very same day.

"Such is the account of my friend. If anyone doubts this statement, it is a proof that he has no sense of what is called historical faith and its grounds; and that he believes only what he himself sees and hears."<sup>1</sup>

The same witness relates another anecdote, "for the truth of which," he says, "I can vouch with the greatest certainty."

"About the year 1770, there was a merchant in Elberfeld, with whom, during seven years of my residence there, I lived in close intimacy. . . . He would not have dared, for all the world, knowingly to have told a falsehood. This friend of mine, who has long ago left this world for a better, related to me the following anecdote:

"His business required him to take a journey to Amsterdam, where Swedenborg at that time resided; and having heard and read much of this singular man, he formed the intention of visiting him, and becoming better acquainted with him. He therefore called upon him, and found a very venerable-looking friendly old man, who received him politely, and requested him to be

seated; on which the following conversation began:

"*Merchant.* Having been called hither by business, I could not deny myself the honour, sir, of paying my respects to you: your writings have caused me to regard you as a very remarkable man.

"*Swedenborg.* May I ask where you are from?

"*M.* I am from Elberfeld, in the duchy of Berg. Your writings contain so much that is beautiful and edifying, that they have made a deep impression upon me; but the source from whence you derive them is so extraordinary, so strange and uncommon, that you will perhaps not take it amiss of a sincere friend of truth, if he desire incontestable proofs that you really have intercourse with the spiritual world.

"*S.* It would be very unreasonable if I took it amiss; but I think I have given sufficient proofs, which cannot be contradicted.

"*M.* Are these the well-known ones, respecting the Queen, the fire in Stockholm, and the receipt?

"*S.* Yes, those are they, and they are true.

"*M.* And yet many objections are brought against them. Might I venture to propose that you give me a similar proof?

"*S.* Why not? Most willingly!

"*M.* I formerly had a friend, who studied divinity at Duisburg, where he fell into consumption, of which he died. I visited this friend a short time before his decease; we conversed together on an important topic; could you learn from him what was the subject of our discourse?

"*S.* We will see. What was the name of your friend?

"The merchant told him his name.

"*S.* How long do you remain here?

"*M.* About eight or ten days.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 490.

"S. Call upon me again in a few days. I will see if I can find your friend.

"The merchant took his leave and despatched his business. Some days afterwards, he went again to Swedenborg, full of expectation. The old gentleman met him with a smile, and said, 'I have spoken with your friend; the subject of your discourse was the *restitution of all things*.' He then related to the merchant, with the greatest precision, what he, and what his deceased friend had maintained. My friend turned pale; for the proof was powerful and invincible. He inquired further, 'How fares it with my friend? Is he in a state of blessedness?' Swedenborg answered, 'No, he is not yet in heaven; he is still in Hades, and torments himself continually with the idea of the restitution of all things.' This answer caused my friend the greatest astonishment. He exclaimed, 'My God! what, in the other world?' Swedenborg replied, 'Certainly; a man takes with him his favourite inclinations and opinions; and it is very difficult to be divested of them. We ought, therefore, to lay them aside here.' My friend took his leave of this remarkable man, perfectly convinced, and returned back to Elberfeld.

"What says highly enlightened infidelity to this? It says, 'Swedenborg was a cunning fellow and employed a secret spy to get the matter out of my friend.' To this I reply in kindness, that Swedenborg was of too noble a mind, and had too much of the fear of God; and my friend was too discreet (for the matter to admit of such an explanation). Suchlike evasions may be classed in the same category as the 'transfiguration of the Redeemer by means of moonshine!'

"That Swedenborg for many years had frequent intercourse with the inhabitants of the spiritual world,

is not subject to any doubt, but is a settled fact."<sup>1</sup>

Many others have testified to the truth of the messages Swedenborg brought from their deceased friends. An important witness of this class is Christopher Springer, a man of much political influence in his time. He wrote to the Abbé Pernety in 1782, ten years after Swedenborg's decease: "All that he has told me of my deceased friends and enemies, and of the secrets I had with them, is almost past belief. He even explained to me in what manner peace was concluded between Sweden and the King of Prussia; and he praised my conduct on that occasion. He even specified the high personages whose services I made use of at that time [Springer was employed by the English Government to arrange the peace]; which was, nevertheless, a profound secret between us."<sup>2</sup>

The story of the Stockholm fire is paralleled by a somewhat similar one related by Dr R. L. Tafel in the *Documents* (vol. ii. p. 724). He writes:

"Madame A. A. De Frese, wife of the late Captain Carl Georg De Frese, and granddaughter of the manufacturer Bolander of Gothenburg, mentioned in the following account, told the editor of these documents during his stay in Stockholm in 1869, the following anecdote:

"In a large company assembled in Gothenburg about 1770 in honour of Swedenborg, there was present the manufacturer Bolander, who was the owner of very extensive cloth mills. During dinner Swedenborg suddenly turned to Mr Bolander, and said to him sharply: 'Sir, you had better go to your mills!' Mr Bolander was very much surprised at the tone of voice in which Swedenborg spoke to him, and thought it anything but polite; but he rose

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 487-489.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 533.



nevertheless from the table, and went to his mills. On arriving there he found that a large piece of cloth had fallen down near the furnace, and had commenced burning. If he had delayed but a little longer, he would have found his property in ashes. After removing the danger, Mr Bolander returned to the company and expressed his thanks to Swedenborg, telling him what had happened. Swedenborg smiled, and said that he had seen the danger, and also that there was no time to be lost, wherefore he had addressed him thus abruptly.”<sup>1</sup>

We have already remarked upon the good fortune, as regards weather, which Swedenborg enjoyed in his many voyages, and the almost superstitious delight with which the masters of the vessels he sailed in received him as a passenger. When he returned to Stockholm from England in September 1766, he sailed with a Captain Dixon, of which voyage Springer gives this account :

“When the captain of the vessel called for Swedenborg, I took leave of him, and wished him a happy journey : having then asked the captain if he had a good supply of provisions on board, he answered me that he had as much as would be required. Swedenborg then observed, ‘My friend, we have not need of a large quantity ; for this day week we shall, by the aid of God, enter into the port of Stockholm, at two o’clock.’ On Captain Dixon’s return, he related to me that this happened exactly as Swedenborg had foretold.”<sup>2</sup>

Of this voyage, Swedenborg wrote to Dr Beyer, 25th September 1766 :<sup>3</sup> “I arrived here in Stockholm as early as September 8. The trip

from England was made in eight days ; a favourable wind increasing to a perfect storm carried the ship along in this style.” The captain himself is said to have remarked that never in all his life had he experienced such a favourable wind as on that occasion, and that it followed him at every turn he made.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, what are we to say to these stories ? Some may be explained as coincidences ; some may have been exaggerated or coloured by their narrators ; but they are too numerous and too well attested for all to be explained in this way. Unless all evidence is worthless, they indicate that Swedenborg’s condition was distinctly abnormal, and that he was *en rapport* with spiritual beings to an unexampled degree. This, of course, does not prove the truth of his teachings, but it justifies the claim he made to the possession of means of spiritual knowledge denied to the generality of men.

## CHAPTER XVII

### TESTIMONIES

If men could only be induced to set aside their prejudices, and form an independent judgment of a writer from his own life and works, there would be little need to quote the opinions of others as to his personal character or literary merits. In the case of Swedenborg, as Dr Beyer justly remarks, “the most Divine seal, and the one most suitable to the state of all men, is this, that his principles harmonise with sound reason, and that a lover of his writings will find his way cleared by their means from so many doubts, so many contradictions, and so many doctrines revolting to sound reason.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 724.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Christopher Springer to the Abbé Pernety. *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 532.

<sup>3</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 250.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 560.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Prelate Cöttinger, *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 1051.

But in regard to our author, prejudice is so strong that no apology is necessary for citing the testimony of his contemporaries to his high character, learning, and general reliability; and of contemporary and later witnesses to the value of the truths he taught.

First, as to character. Among all who knew him during life, whether friendly to his teachings or not, there is but one voice, that of unqualified praise. Outside White's biography the breath of scandal is scarcely heard. Even this ungenerous critic is compelled to admit that "wherever Swedenborg was known, we find a gracious memory";<sup>1</sup> and that in him was "no vehemence, anger, nor hatred; no sarcasm, contempt, nor fretfulness. . . . Of envy he appears to have been utterly free; a malignant or a flippant sentence we shall in vain look for through all his books. If he desired fame he never left the path of good sense to look for it; and of any eccentricity, or any clap-trap for the sake of attention or admiration he was simply incapable."<sup>2</sup> There are few public men of whom so much could be truthfully said.

Professor Scherer, who resided in Stockholm during Swedenborg's lifetime, testifies that "on account of his excellent character, he was universally held in high estimation";<sup>3</sup> and there are many who support his statement. Shortly after Swedenborg's death the general sentiment in regard to his character was expressed by Counsellor Sandels, in the eulogium he delivered in the House of Nobles, in the name of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Stockholm. Such a panegyric may be regarded as possibly overcharged; but, on the other hand, we must remember that Sandels was not favourable to Swedenborg's theological views, and

had no interest to serve in unduly exalting the subject of his remarks. He described him as "a noble man, celebrated alike for his virtues and the depth of his knowledge, who was one of the oldest members of this Academy, and whom we all knew and loved." "The beautiful picture of his life," he said, "deserves to be carefully examined." Speaking of his appointment as a young man to the Assessorship of the Board of Mines, he remarked that "he was even then well known, both in his own country and abroad, by his acquisitions in general literature and in science, and by his worthy demeanour." He refers to his "genuinely good disposition," and declares that "he deserves to be set up as a pattern of virtue and of reverence for his Maker; for in him there was no sort of double dealing." He says again, "We cannot discover in him any sign of arrogance, rashness, or intention to deceive."<sup>1</sup>

The Abbé Pernety tells us: "Swedenborg was of a very gentle disposition; but he was straightforward, and would not betray the truth from respect to men, or for any other reason." "He always practised the morality he taught."

Count Höpken, writing to General Tuxen, 21st May 1773, remarks: "The late Swedenborg certainly was a pattern of sincerity, virtue, and piety, and at the same time, in my opinion, the most learned man in this kingdom";<sup>2</sup> and speaks of him elsewhere as "that honest old gentleman."<sup>3</sup> "I know," he writes in another letter, "that Swedenborg has related his *memorabilia bona fide*."

John Christian Cuno, of Amsterdam, who knew Swedenborg intimately in his later years, is full of

<sup>1</sup> This eulogium is given *in extenso* in Tafel's *Documents*, vol. i. pp. 12-29.

<sup>2</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 410.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 633.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 421.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i. pp. 181 and 183.

<sup>3</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 716.

praise for his moral excellence, although he could never bring himself to accept his teachings. He speaks of him as "a righteous, just, and most learned man." He was convinced, he said, of his probity, and sincere love of the truth; and declared that he was "too honest a man deliberately to lie." He speaks of him affectionately as "dear, old, honest Mr Swedenborg"; and says that he was irresistibly drawn towards him, notwithstanding his objections to his teachings.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Atterbom, who also was sceptical in regard to Swedenborg's spiritual experiences, says that "in everything else he was a shining light of northern erudition, and a pattern of moral excellence."<sup>2</sup> Kant bore similar testimony on the ground of information received from a personal friend who was acquainted with Swedenborg. "Swedenborg," he said, "is a reasonable, polite, and open-hearted man: he also is a man of learning."<sup>3</sup> The Rev. Nicholas Collin wrote to the Rev. John Hargrove, of Baltimore, U.S.A., the first minister of the New Church in America, under date 16th March 1801: "Swedenborg was universally esteemed for his various erudition in mathematics, mineralogy, etc., and for his probity, benevolence, and general virtue."<sup>4</sup> Captain Stollhammar wrote to the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* (13th May 1788) to correct some false statements respecting Swedenborg which had appeared in that journal; and, while declaring that he was "far from being a follower of Swedenborg," testified thus: "The only weakness of this truly honest man was his belief in ghost-seeing; but I knew him for many years, and I can con-

fidently affirm that he was as fully persuaded that he conversed with spirits, as I am that I am writing at this moment. As a citizen and as a friend, he was a man of the greatest integrity, abhorring imposture, and leading an exemplary life."<sup>1</sup>

Sincerity and truthfulness were striking qualities in Swedenborg's character, as many who knew him have borne witness. Mrs Hart, the wife of his London printer, told Mr Provo that "he was of such a nature that he could impose on no one, that he always spoke the truth concerning every little matter, and that he would not have made an evasion though his life had been at stake";<sup>2</sup> and others speak to the same effect. Even his enemies could find no occasion against him in his mode of life; Bishop Filenius, inveighing against his theological teachings as "most infamous and untruthful nonsense," is compelled to admit that their author "has at all times been universally honoured, and has been distinguished for his learning in the sciences of mining and physics."<sup>3</sup>

If enemies were thus subdued by the blameless and lovable character of our author, how must he have been regarded by sympathetic friends? The Rev. Thomas Hartley wrote to him (2nd August 1769): "I consider myself most highly favoured and I rejoice from my inmost heart in having had the honour, which you lately granted me, of conversing with you: and also in your having been so kind and friendly towards me who am quite unworthy of such a favour. But your charity towards the neighbour, the heavenly benignity shining from your countenance, and your childlike simplicity, devoid of all vain show and egotism, are so great, and the treasure of wisdom possessed by you

<sup>1</sup> For Cuno's letters and general testimony see *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 441-485.

<sup>2</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 718.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 627.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 423.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 678.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 540.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 314.



is so sweetly tempered with gentleness, that it did not inspire in me a feeling of awe, but one of love, which refreshed me in my innermost heart." <sup>1</sup>

Swedenborg's reply to these effusive sentiments is characteristically modest. "The friendship which you manifest in your letter," he says, "greatly pleases me; and I thank you sincerely for both, but especially for your friendship. The praises with which you overwhelm me, I receive simply as expressions of your love for the truths contained in my writings; and I refer them, as their source, to the Lord, our Saviour, from whom is everything true, because He is the Truth Itself" (*Documents*, vol. i. p. 6).

In the preface to his translation of Swedenborg's *Intercourse between the Soul and the Body*, Mr Hartley takes the opportunity of defending the character of the author. "That Mr Swedenborg's life, qualifications, and high pretensions," he says, "have passed through a strict scrutiny in his own country, as to every part of his character, moral, civil, and divine, is not to be doubted; and that he maintains dignity, esteem, and friendship there with the great, the wise, the good, I am well informed by a gentleman of that nation, now residing in London." Speaking from his own knowledge, he says: "He has nothing of the precisian in his manner, nothing melancholy in his temper, and nothing in the least bordering upon the enthusiast in his conversation or writings, in the latter of which he delivers facts in the plain style of narrative, speaks of his converse with spirits and angels with the same coolness that he treats of earthly things, as being alike common to him; he proves all points of doctrine from Scripture testimony; always connects charity and good life with

true faith, and is upon the whole as rational a divine as ever I read.

"If these parts of character may be allowed to gain credit to his testimony, I think it may be pronounced concerning him, that he is the most extraordinary Messenger from God to man that has appeared on earth since the Apostolic age, and that he may properly be called the Living Apostle of these days." <sup>1</sup>

Writing to the Rev. John Clowes, of Manchester, the same witness says: "It may reasonably be supposed that I have weighed the character of our illustrious author in the scale of my best judgment, from the personal knowledge I had of him, from the best information I could procure concerning him, and from a diligent perusal of his writings; and according thereto I have found him to be the sound divine, the good man, the deep philosopher, the universal scholar, and the polite gentleman; and I further believe that he had a high degree of illumination from the Spirit of God." <sup>2</sup>

Dr Beyer, in defending himself before the Consistory of Gothenburg, remarked that "Swedenborg is generally known to be, as to his person and life, a God-fearing and virtuous, and also a quiet, peaceable, and well-reputed citizen; and in the public prints is declared to be a giant of learning in the various sciences; but especially is he known to have an unbounded reverence for the Divine Word. The thoughts of such a man on matters of religion," he justly observes, "ought surely not to be condemned rashly, and without a previous most thorough examination." <sup>3</sup>

Dr Messiter, writing to the Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh University (23rd October 1769) says: "As I have had the honour of being

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 502 and 503.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 517.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 286.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. i. p. 1.

frequently admitted to the author's company when he was in London, and to converse with him on various points of learning, I will venture to affirm that there are no parts of mathematical, philosophical, or medical knowledge, nay, I believe I might justly say, of human literature, to which he is in the least a stranger; yet so totally insensible is he of his own merit, that I am confident he does not know that he has any; and, as he himself somewhere says of the angels, he always turns his head away on the slightest encomium."<sup>1</sup> To the Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, he wrote: "I can with great truth assert, that he is truly amiable in his morals, most learned and humble in his discourse, and superlatively affable, humane, and courteous in his behaviour; and this joined with a solidity of understanding and penetration far above the level of an ordinary genius."<sup>2</sup>

Thorild, the Swedish poet and metaphysician, described Swedenborg as "a man of vast and consummate learning, an honour and glory to his nation, who preserved the veneration for his genius by the truly apostolical simplicity and purity of his morals."<sup>3</sup> "Dr v. Baur, the founder of the so-called 'Tübingen School of Theology,' said to some of his students who visited him at his house, that 'Swedenborg was the greatest mortal that ever lived.' This statement," says Dr R. L. Tafel, "was made to my father by my late uncle, Prof. Immanuel Tafel, of Tübingen, who likewise added that by the influence of Prof. v. Baur all the original editions of Swedenborg's works were bought for the University Library."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. pp. 522 and 523.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 524 and 525.

<sup>3</sup> *Emanuel Swedenborg, as a Philosopher and Man of Science*, by R. L. Tafel, Ph. D. (Chicago, E. B. Myers & Chandler, 1867), pp. 21 and 22.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 55.

As to Swedenborg's intellectual capacity and attainments there is no dispute. Dr Beyer remarks: "Swedenborg's works give evidence of an unexpected insight into all the so-called learned languages, as the Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, without mentioning the Latin, which knowledge with him is fully commensurate with the importance of the matters on which he treats; further, that he possesses in a remarkable degree a knowledge of various commendable and useful sciences, as, of philosophy in its most abstruse depths, of mathematics, architecture, natural history, chemistry, experimental philosophy, astronomy, history, and especially of anatomy, and others."<sup>1</sup> Dr Rosén speaks of his "most unusual learning in natural and spiritual things," and his "great and profound insight."<sup>2</sup> "His works," says Count Höpken, "everywhere sparkle with genius."<sup>3</sup> Cuno writes: "No one will be able to deny that Swedenborg is a philosopher, and indeed one of the first magnitude. . . . In the whole history of the world I have found no other scholar with whom I could compare him except the great physician and chemist Theophrastus Paracelsus."<sup>4</sup> M. Matter, the author of a French life of Swedenborg, thus expresses himself: "In the whole of the last century, which produced so many eminent men, there is not one that was more vigorously constituted as to body and mind than Swedenborg; and there is not one who was a more industrious, more learned, more ingenious and more fertile writer, and a more lucid teacher. Not one in the whole of that century in which Rousseau proclaimed himself to be as virtuous as any other man, was better than Swed-

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 329.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 357 and 359.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 409.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 478.



enborg, nor more beloved, and happier."<sup>1</sup>

Of the prominent writers of the nineteenth century, many have acknowledged their indebtedness to Swedenborg; and many others, consciously or unconsciously, have adopted some of his characteristic ideas without acknowledgment.<sup>2</sup>

Coleridge was very strongly drawn towards him, and spoke in the highest terms both of his philosophical and theological teachings. In a private letter, written in 1820, he said: "Of the too limited time which my ill health and the exigencies of to-day leave in my power, I have given the larger portion to the works of Swedenborg, particularly to the 'Universal Theology of the New Church.' I find very few, and even those but *doubtful*, instances of tenets in which I am conscious of any substantial difference of opinion with the enlightened author." There are several references to Swedenborg in Coleridge's *Literary Remains*. Of some parts of *The Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, he wrote: "I remember nothing in Lord Bacon superior, few passages equal, either in depth of thought, or of richness, dignity, and felicity of diction, to the weightiness of the truths contained in these articles." Speaking generally, he said: "I can venture to assert that as a moralist Swedenborg is above all praise; and that as a naturalist, psychologist, and theologian he has strong and varied claims on the gratitude and admiration of the professional and philosophical student."

Emerson's estimate of Swedenborg is so well known that it is hardly

<sup>1</sup> *Emanuel de Swedenborg, sa Vie, ses Ecrits et sa Doctrine*. Paris: Didier et Cie, 1863. Pref. pp. vi. vii.

<sup>2</sup> See the author's *Swedenborg and Modern Thought* (Speirs, 1 Bloomsbury Street, W.C.), and article on "Coventry Patmore and Swedenborg" in *Westminster Review*, January 1906.

necessary to refer to it. Although he criticises him in some respects, especially as being too theological, he bestows unbounded praise upon him on other accounts. He described him as "one of the missouriums and mastodons of literature . . . not to be measured by whole colleges of ordinary scholars": he was, he said, "a colossal soul, . . . and requires a long focal distance to be seen."

Another American writer who fell under the influence of Swedenborg was Henry James (Senior). In his book, *Substance and Shadow*, he wrote: "I fully concede to Swedenborg what is usually denied him, namely, an extreme sobriety of mind displayed under all the exceptional circumstances of his career, and which ends by making us feel at last his very words to be almost insipid with veracity. . . . Such sincere books it seems to me were never before written."<sup>1</sup>

It was partly through Emerson, partly through James, and partly through Dr J. J. Garth Wilkinson, the translator into English of Swedenborg's philosophical works, that Carlyle made some acquaintance with Swedenborg's teachings. Although the fact is not generally recognised, *Sartor Resartus* is saturated with Swedenborg. On one occasion Emerson sent Carlyle a copy of *Observations on the Growth of the Mind*, by Sampson Reed, in acknowledging which the Chelsea philosopher wrote: "He is a faithful thinker, that Swedenborgian drug-gist of yours, with really deep ideas, which makes me, too, pause and think, were it only to consider what manner of man *he* must be, and what manner of thing, after all, Swedenborgianism must be."<sup>2</sup> About the same time he wrote to Dr Wilkinson "a beautiful letter," in which he

<sup>1</sup> P. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*, vol. i. p. 19.



said: "Hitherto I have known nearly nothing of Swedenborg; or indeed, I might say less than nothing, having been wont to picture him as an amiable but inane visionary, with affections quite out of proportion to his insight; from whom nothing at all was to be learned. It is so we judge of extraordinary men. But I have been rebuked already. A little book, by one Sampson Reed, of Boston, in New England, which some friend sent hither, taught me that a Swedenborgian might have thoughts of the calmest kind on the deepest things; that, in short, I did not know Swedenborg, and ought to be ready to know him."

Many years later, he wrote to a lady who drew his attention to his unfair classification of Swedenborgians with mesmerists, magicians, cabalists, etc., in his essay on Cagliostro,<sup>1</sup> expressing regret for the libel, and explaining that he spoke in ignorance and "from mere common hearsay." "I have since," he said, "made some personal acquaintance with the man; read several of his books, what biographies of him could be heard of, and have reflected for myself on the singular appearance he makes in the world, and the notable message he was sent to deliver to his fellow-creatures in that epoch. A man of great and indisputable cultivation, strong mathematical intellect, and the most pious, seraphic turn of mind—a man beautiful, lovable, and tragical to me, with many thoughts in him, which, when I interpret them for myself, I find to belong to the high and perennial in human thought."

It would be impossible even to mention the names of all the recent writers who show the influence of Swedenborg in their works: Tennyson, the Brownings, and Coventry Patmore, of English poets, exhibit

it most strongly, while the writings of Ruskin, George Macdonald, Henry Drummond, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thoreau, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Goethe, Heine, and Balzac are all more or less tinctured with his ideas. Some of them have spoken in the highest terms of his teachings, and others have quoted striking passages from his works with approval.

Balzac's interest in Swedenborg is well known, and the views of the latter are discussed in several of his novels. He makes one of his characters say: "I have returned to Swedenborg after vast studies of all religions; after convincing myself, by all the books which patient Germany, England, and France have published during the last sixty years, of the profound truth of my youthful perceptions of the Bible. Beyond a doubt, Swedenborg gathers to himself all religions, or rather the young religions of humanity. . . . Though his books are diffuse and obscure, they hold the elements of a vast social conception. His theocracy is sublime; and his religion is the only one a superior mind can accept. He alone enables man to touch God; he creates a thirst for Him; he rescues the majesty of God from the swaddling-clothes in which other human faiths have muffled it."<sup>1</sup>

The view that Swedenborg's books are "diffuse and obscure" is a common one, but is not shared by those best able to form an opinion. Vaughan, in his *Hours with the Mystics*, expresses an exactly contrary opinion. He says:

"The thoughts of Swedenborg have never to struggle with expression like those of Boehme. His mind is of a methodical and scientific cast. His style is calm and clear. Nothing is lost in cloud. He is never amazed, he never exaggerates. He never

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1833, the year in which he first met Emerson.

<sup>1</sup> See article on "Balzac and Swedenborg," in *New Church Review* (1896), p. 496.

pants and strives, has none of the tearful vehemence and glowing emotion which choke the utterance of Boehme. He is never familiar on this page and rhapsodical on that. He is the Olympian Jove of mystics. He sets up no doctrine based on arbitrary or fantastical interpretations. His doctrinal system is drawn from the literal sense without any mysticism whatever. It is calmly deduced by citation, exegesis, and comparison of passages. Strong and deep is this stream which carries no fleck of foam."

It is not generally known how greatly the Brownings, especially Mrs Browning, were imbued with Swedenborg's ideas. *Aurora Leigh* is full of thoughts culled from his books. Mrs Browning makes no secret of her indebtedness to our author: in her published *Letters* she frequently mentions him. We learn that the winter of 1852-3 was spent in meditation on Swedenborg's philosophy (vol. ii., p. 141); and, in October of the latter year, she wrote to Miss I. Blagden: "I shall get at Swedenborg in Rome, and get on with my readings. There are deep truths in him, I cannot doubt, though I can't receive *everything*, which may be my fault." It is evident that as her studies continued, her conviction of the truth of his teachings deepened; until in March, 1859, she speaks of "we Swedenborgians," thus including herself, and possibly her husband, in the category of disciples.

Coventry Patmore is another poet who has made frank acknowledgment of his indebtedness to Swedenborg. Mr Edmund Gosse, in his recently published *Life of Patmore*, quotes the following remarkable letter: "I never tire of reading Swedenborg; he is unfathomably profound and yet simple. I came on a passage . . . which I don't know how to admire enough for its

surpassing insight into truth. . . . You will think it all very odd at first, but after you have got used to the queerness, you will find that it abounds with perception of the truth to a degree unparalleled perhaps in uninspired writing."

It will be evident that Swedenborg's influence is by no means to be measured by the number of his professed followers. His teachings are taking hold of men's minds, and directing the current of modern thought silently but surely. "Swedenborg," writes James Freeman Clarke, "became the organ of a spiritual philosophy, the power of which is hardly yet understood, but which seems likely to leaven all religious thought." Emerson also perceived this. "The most remarkable step in the religious history of recent ages," he said, "is that made by the genius of Swedenborg. . . . These truths passing out of his system into general circulation, are now met with every day, qualifying the views and creeds of all churches, and of men of no church." The reason of this is explained by another American writer, Henry James, the elder, who says that Swedenborg "grasped with clear and intellectual vision the seminal principles of things."

While many recognise that Swedenborg's teachings form a powerful element in the development of modern thought, only those are able to fully appreciate them whose moral and spiritual natures as well as their mental faculties are appealed to by him. Such are irresistibly drawn to him. Thus Dr Beyer, writing to Swedenborg himself, says: "I refrain from describing to you the joy I have often experienced, and how the glorious truths are beginning to shine before me";<sup>1</sup> while to Prelate Ætinger he wrote: "Surely mankind never

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, vol. ii. p. 238.

received the revelation of heavenly and Divine Truths with greater marks of certainty than the present.”<sup>1</sup> General Tuxen thus expressed himself: “It appears to me that no system of divinity is more worthy of the dignity of God, or more consolatory to man; and by the Divine help I will always retain this thought in my mind, until I can be convinced that any part thereof is either contrary to the Word and Scriptures of God, or to sound reason.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Documents*, p. 1051.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1148.

I have referred several times to White's depreciatory remarks about Swedenborg. It is with more satisfaction that I quote the closing sentences of his larger *Life*. “One by one,” he says, “the lights of the last century grow dim and disappear, but time only adds to the power and clear shining of my Author's flame. He testifies of this light, that it is the New Jerusalem as to doctrine, yea the second advent of the Lord Christ—the Truth. It is an awful claim, yet the more I study his writings, . . . the more credible does the claim become.”

## APPENDIX

### SWEDENBORG AND HIS GARDENER FOLKS

IN Dr Wetterberg's (Uncle Adam's) *Altartaflan* (Altar pictures), a collection of stories of Swedish life and history, there is a delightful account of Swedenborg's relations with his simple retainers, Andersson and his wife, who acted respectively as his gardener and housekeeper. As it is only based on oral tradition (though it exhibits every indication of truthfulness), and has perhaps been dressed up a little, I have not included it among authentic testimonies to Swedenborg's manner of life; but it is such a charming story, and so characteristic of the man, that I have ventured to reproduce it as an appendix.

The scheme of the *Altartaflan*, it should be explained, is a series of conversations between a father and his son, the latter of whom sees certain pictures in a dream or vision, which his father interprets to him. The scene in this instance is a peasant's dwelling near Fahlun,—the paternal home, in fact, of Bishop Swedenborg;<sup>1</sup> and the father, in

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 5.

explaining this to the son, tells him that they belong to the same stock. This leads to his speaking of Swedenborg, and to his son's inquiring:

“Did you never in your youth see Swedenborg and talk with him?”

“No, my son; only once during the lifetime of this remarkable man was my father in Stockholm; but Swedenborg was at that time in England, where he frequently resided, and we did not meet him. We visited the house which he owned in the Södermalm. I was then a mere boy, but I recollect it as well as if it had happened only to-day. My fancy was very much excited, and I expected to find the place where this wonderful man resided something between a church and a burying vault.

“My father, although he was an orthodox priest, had nevertheless also a tendency to mysticism. But he laboured as much as possible against this bias of his nature, and in his anxiety to overcome it he went farther than he otherwise would have done. In consequence of this,



he always described Swedenborg to me as a sort of visionary and his doctrine as thoroughly un-Christian and without any foundation. Yet, in spite of all this, I noticed that these prejudices were merely a thin veil, under which there lay concealed a feeling of deep veneration for this uncommonly gifted man. Children, generally, have this faculty of seeing through the shell to the kernel. And it is this which often renders them familiar and unrestrained in the company of a stern old man, and in tumbling up his grey locks; when, on the other hand, they will hide away in a corner when a smooth-tongued, courteous man of the world desires to flatter them. We can always rest assured that children will gather around a man who loves them, though he may not have expressed his fondness by a single word. In short, I saw through my good old father, how his words belied his inner feeling; and this contradiction increased my curiosity to know something of our absent kinsman, who, it seemed to me, was himself a sort of spirit being.

"But he was not at home; the little building in which he used to live was in the rear of a large garden, full of berry-bushes and fruit-trees. How simple and unassuming was this house! Nothing like the enchanted castle in the *Arabian Nights*, which I had pictured to myself. Instead of the castle, I found a one-storey dwelling-house, with a few dark rooms; and instead of an enchanted dwarf, there came out a cheerful, friendly little woman, who asked whether we wished to see the assessor's room.

"When the good old woman learned that we were distantly related to her assessor, the band of her tongue was loosened, and she related to us a little story, which I have never seen in print, and which, perhaps better than anything else,

characterises Swedenborg as a man. 'Yes' said the little old woman, 'people judge without seeing, and this almost cost me and Andersson our places. You see my old man who goes yonder, raking the flower-beds; it almost cost us our whole happiness.'

"How so?" asked my father.

"You know, dear pastor, there were so many among our friends who said to me, 'You ought not to serve in Swedenborg's house, for he is no Christian,' they said. Now, the truth is, that then, as now, we thought ever so much of our assessor, but when I heard that he had not the true faith which leads to blessedness, I began to doubt whether it was right to serve in his house. It was a hard struggle, for I thought as much of the assessor as of my own father; and so I lay many a night weeping bitterly that the assessor was not a Christian, and praying for the salvation of his soul. I really fretted myself ill out of mere sorrow, for you see my friends worried me so much, and insisted that I should leave the house of this heathen, who did not believe in Christ, for so they said. At last Andersson noticed that I no longer ate or drank, and wanted to know the cause, and begged so hard that I told him all. Yes, Andersson is a good man, and he always believes me rather than himself; and so he also began to worry.

"But if I should tell the whole story in her words," said Danieli, "it would make it too long; and so I shall relate more briefly what happened."

One day the old man and the old woman, the modest gardener folks, dressed in their holiday suits, entered Swedenborg's silent study, the room with the brown panel-paintings, the gable windows, and a view out on the lilac-bushes. Swedenborg sat with his head resting upon both

hands, poring over a large book. Astonished at the unusual noise, he raised his head and looked towards the door. There stood the good gardener folks, though but the middle of the week, both dressed in their holiday clothes, bowing and curtsying. On Swedenborg's grave but cheerful countenance there played an inquiring smile.

"Why dressed up so, Andersson and Margaret?" he said. "What do you want?"

This was not in truth easy to say, and instead of an answer, Margaret began to cry, and her husband crushed his hat into a thousand wrinkles, and in his heart wished himself more than a thousand miles away.

"Is there any care that lies upon your heart; any distress which has suddenly came over you?" said Swedenborg; "then speak out plainly, and, with God's help, it will all go well again."

"Yes," at last said the old gardener, "yes, we wish to leave the assessor's service."

Swedenborg seemed surprised. "Leave me; and why?" he asked, with his penetrating, friendly look, which pierced them to their very hearts; "I thought as we were growing old together, we should to our very end remain faithful to one another, and never separate in this life."

"Yes, so also we thought ourselves," burst out the housewife, almost overcome with tears; "for thirty years we have served you, and I thought it would be God's pleasure that we should die in your garden, and under your eyes; but, but——"

"Speak out, woman; what lies so heavily upon your heart? I know that both of you think a great deal of me. Is it not so?"

"Yes, before God it is so," said both of them together.

"Speak out then," said Sweden-

berg, with a smile, "and then we may be able to help the matter."

The housewife, whose strong emotion gave her courage to speak, and words to express her thoughts, at last began—"Yes, people say we ought not to serve you any longer, because you are not a right Christian."

"Nothing else, my good woman," said Swedenborg quietly; "nothing else? Well, let the world judge so; but why should you think so?"

"You see you never go to church; for years you have never been inside St Mary's Church."

"Have you never read," replied Swedenborg, solemnly, "that where two or three are gathered together in the Lord's name, that there is His church and meeting-place? Do you believe that it is the steeple and copper roof which makes a holy place of it? Do you believe that it is holy for anyone else but him who has in his heart Christ's church? Do you believe that it is the walls, organ, and pulpit, which constitute its holiness?"

"No, no; I know that well enough."

"Well, then, here at home, in this room, in the arbour, in the garden, wherever a man or spirit lives, within or without space and time, wherever a prayer is either thought or read, wherever a voice of thanksgiving is sent up to Him who is the Giver of all good, there is His church; and it is consequently here where I live sheltered from the world."

Both the faithful servants bowed their heads and said, "But this is not the way of the world."

"The way of the world, my friends?" replied Swedenborg. "I suppose the way of the world is Christian, is it not?"

"Yes, it is."

"In name it is, but not in spirit and in truth. Faith without works



is a dead faith ; a flower which does not live is nothing, but lifeless dust ; and faith which does not live in every action of man is a dead faith ; it is no faith at all. Here, my friends, see what this Christian world really does. They call, indeed, upon Him, the only Son, in their times of need, but they forget both His teachings and His life. Like an obstinate child who despises warning, they rush into all manner of lusts, into pride and wickedness, which are like a thin, frail covering over an abyss ; and over this yawning abyss they scoff at their teacher, and act foolishly and madly until this covering breaks. Then they call out for help, but in vain, for they have long since forfeited it ; sometimes they are dragged up again, but in their foolish pride they let go the saving hand, they spurn the healing repentance, and continue their course of vain talk and idle sport. So does the Christian world, and they think that all that is necessary for them is to have a priest to speak to them a few hours in the week about God and the Saviour ; and they do not think that any more is required of them than to hear and to forget. They therefore believe that it is outward gesture, the singing of psalms, and the tones of the organ, together with the empty sound of recited prayers, which penetrate to the Lord in heaven. Truly, when the people prostrate themselves in the churches, then it is the voice of a few only that penetrates to the Lord.

"Let me tell you something. To-day there was a little child sitting in the street, a little blind girl, who folded her little hands upon her lap, and turned her darkened eyes towards heaven ; and when I saw her, and asked her, 'What makes you look so happy, although you are blind ?' the little girl said, 'I am thinking of God our Father, who will some day take me to Him, and show

me all His splendour.' Truly, my good people, it was only at the corner of the street that she sat, yet I took off my hat, and bowed my head, for I knew that God was near, and that this was a holy place.

'No, there is a worm gnawing at the kernel of Christianity although its shell is whole. Charity is the kernel, and the outward forms are the shell. Where do you see charity in this uncharitable world ? As long as violence prevails and rules, as long as selfishness and avarice oppress mankind, and as long as earthly happiness is the goal which we endeavour to reach, so long the world is not Christian. But when men at all times, and everywhere, recognise that they are in God's presence and under His eyes ; when each of their actions is the reflection of his eternal love and of His example ; when their goal is placed beyond the reach of time, and not here in the dust, then only are men Christians. Do you know, my friends, what I have done ? Nothing else than what was formerly done in Palestine. When the Christians were on the point of giving way, then the standard was thrown beyond, as a goal for them to follow, and thither they pressed over to the other side, and as they rushed they conquered. So also have I set up a goal for mankind, not only for their thoughts, but also for their deeds, in another world, so as to let them know that it is not enough for them to gather themselves together, but also to struggle. Such, then, is my faith. If I believe more than others, I certainly do not believe less. And now, my friends, look back upon the thirty years during which you have followed me almost daily with your eyes, and then judge whether it is I or others who are Christians. Judge for yourselves. I submit myself to your judgment ; and then do what you deem to be right."



He beckoned with his hand and they went away ; and then quietly, as if nothing had happened, he continued his reading.

The next day they stood again, in their week-day clothes, in the presence of their master, who asked them with a friendly smile, " Well, how did the examination turn out ? "

" O, master Assessor," said both of them, " we looked for a single word, for a single action, which was not in agreement with what the Lord has commanded us, yet we could not find a single one."

" Very well," said Swedenborg, " but it is not quite so ; many thoughts have been, and many an action has been, not perfectly straight ; yet I have tried to do as well as I could. And as a child, who in the beginning spells out his words, and stumbles often before he can read, provided he goes to work lovingly and cheerfully and strives hard to

do better, is loved by his father, so also it may have been with me ; at least I pray and hope that it may be so. But you will remain with me ? "

" Yes, master Assessor, until our death."

" Thank you, my friends ; I knew it would be so. Let people say what they please about my teachings, but do you judge them by my life ; if they agree, then all is right ; but if there is the least disagreement between them, then one of the two must be wrong."

When the little old woman had finished her story, which she had told after the manner of her people, by constantly repeating, " said the Assessor," and, " said I," her eyes were glistening with emotion, and she added, " God, indeed, must have forsaken us when He allowed us to go astray so far as to suspect our own Assessor of not being a Christian."

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